European Advances in Consumer Research
Preface

The eighth European conference of the Association for Consumer Research was held from July 10-14, 2007. We were privileged to have Bocconi University as the host of the conference. These proceedings contain abstracts and complete papers of presentations that were made in competitive paper sessions, special topics sessions, roundtables, the working paper session, and the film festival.

As we began the process of soliciting submissions and reviewers, we were excited by the tremendous amount of interest in the conference, as well as the support and spirit of volunteerism that helped make our job of managing and completing the review processes so much easier. Furthermore, the high number of submissions meant that our acceptance rate mirrored that of the domestic ACR conference on many fronts. For example, we accepted 126 of 263 competitive paper submissions (47.9%). Our submission and acceptance rates for the other categories of papers were as follows: 14 of 19 special sessions (73.6%), 42 of 68 working papers (61.8 %), three of four roundtables (75%), and nine of fourteen films (64%). Obviously, the high number of submissions placed additional burdens not only on the EACR Program Committee, but on the hundreds of reviewers whose names are listed in this program, and to whom we are very grateful.

We also wish to thank those who organized specific aspects of the conference. John Sherry and Stijn van Osselaer created a lively and engaging doctoral symposium that allowed students from many countries to interact with important scholars. Russ Belk and Rob Kozinets once again put together a wonderful schedule of provocative, increasingly professional films from scholars who are now choosing this venue a way to disseminate their research. Linda Tuncay served as Track Chair for the working paper session, and we are grateful for her for this service, as well as for arranging sponsorship of one of our coffees by the Consumer Behavior Special Interest Group of the American Marketing Association.

It takes a global village to produce a conference such as EACR, and there are many people who deserve additional thanks: Rajiv Vaidyanathan, Executive Secretary of the ACR, for the advice and encouragement; Stefano Podesta, Director of the Università Commerciale Luigi Bocconi and the marketing faculty and staff at Bocconi University of their support, our webmaster Alex Cherfas of ChilleeSys, Inc. for his patient and prompt management of the conference, Meagan Hennessey, Webmaster, Office for Information Management at UIUC for helping us with our initial website, the graduate students at Bocconi, UIUC, and Loyola University Chicago who helped with aspects of the conference management, Laura Orlandi and Nicoletta Ceriani of Promoest for their assistance with the travel arrangements and spousal tours, and Dean Abol Jalilvand of Loyola University Chicago for providing sponsorship of one of our coffee breaks. We thank our families for their support leading up to and during the conference, which enabled us to have the energy and enthusiasm for putting EACR together. Finally, we would like to thank Merrie Brucks, current ACR president, and David Mick, Barbara Kahn and the rest of the ACR Board for giving a positive nod to our proposal to host EACR 2007 at Bocconi in Milano. We hope the experience was eccellente!

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Cele C. Otnes, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
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Film Festival
Russell W. Belk, York University
Robert V. Kozinets, York University
Roundtables
Mary Ann McGrath, Loyola University Chicago

Working papers
Linda Tuncay, Loyola University Chicago

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Kang-Ning Xia, National Chengchi University
Lan Xia, Bentley College
Natalia Yannopoulou, Warwick Business School
E. Taqi Yazicioglu, No affiliation
Toby Yip, Hong Kong Baptist University
Lia Zarantonello, IULM University
Fabrizio Zerbini, Università Bocconi
Konstantina Zerva, Universitat Autonoma de Barcelona
Shenghui Zhao, University of Miami
Bajun Zhu, Fudan University
Katerina Zdorovtseva, Università Bocconi
TUESDAY, JULY 10

**Doctoral Consortium**
10:00am-6:30pm

Co-Chairs:
*John F. Sherry, University of Notre Dame, USA*
*Stijn M.J. van Osselaer, Erasmus University, The Netherlands*

**Writing a Publishable Doctoral Thesis**
(short presentations followed by panel discussion)
2:00-3:30pm

*Stefano Puntoni, Erasmus University, The Netherlands*
*Luk Warlop, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium*
*Lorna Stevens, University of Ulster, UK*
*Pauline Maclaran, Keele University, UK*

**Substantive Session:**
**Consumer Decisions**
(presentations)
4:00-5:30pm

*Simona Botti, Cornell University, USA*
*Joachim Vosgerau, Carnegie Mellon University, USA*
*Søren Askegaard, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark*
*Laura Oswald, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA*

**Dinner with doctoral consortium faculty**
7:00pm
WEDNESDAY, JULY 11

Doctoral Consortium
9:00am-2:00pm

Substantive Session:
Transformative Consumer Research
(presentations)
9:00-10:30am
Sabrina Bruyneel, Carnegie Mellon, USA and Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium
Sidney Levy, University of Arizona, USA
Linda Scott, University of Oxford, UK
Dominique Desjeux, Paris-Sorbonne University, France

Finding a Job and Managing Your Career
11:00am-12:30pm
David Faro, London Business School, UK
Dirk Smeesters, Tilburg University, The Netherlands
Markus Giesler, York University, Canada
Jonathan Schroeder, University of Exeter, UK

WEDNESDAY, JULY 11

Opening Reception
5:00pm

THURSDAY, JULY 12
8:30am-3:30pm

and

FRIDAY, JULY 13
8:30am-5:30pm

EACR Film Festival

Film Festival
Co-Chairs: Russell W. Belk, York University, Canada
Robert V. Kozinets, York University, Canada

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1.1 Special Session:
Making Up Consumers: A Journey into the Marketing Department

Session Chair: Julien Cayla, University of New South Wales, Australia
Discussion leader: Jonathan Schroeder, University of Exeter, UK

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Detlev Zwick, York University, Canada
Janice Denegri-Knott, Bournemouth University, UK

Storytelling and International Marketing Strategy
Julien Cayla, AGSM, University of New South Wales, Australia
Lisa Peñaloza, InteraCT Center, Edhec, France and University of Utah, USA

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Ingrid M. Martin, California State University-Long Beach, USA
Michael Kamins, University of Southern California, USA

An Application of the Extended Model of Goal Directed Behaviour within Smoking Cessation: An Examination of the Role of Emotions

Jennifer A. Thomson, Glasgow Caledonian University, UK
Deirdre Shaw, University of Glasgow, UK
Edward M.K. Shiu, University of Strathclyde, UK

THURSDAY, JULY 12
Parallel Sessions 1.8-1.14
10:30am-Noon

1.8 Family Consumption II

Session Chair: Shona Bettany, University of Bradford, UK

Dual Spousal Work Involvement

Charles Schaninger, University at Albany, SUNY, USA
Sanjay Putrevu, University at Albany, SUNY, USA

The Experience of Home Foreclosure: Coping with Involuntary Loss of Home and Transition of Identity

Barbara L. Gross, California State University, Northridge, USA

Not Too Conspicuous, Mothers’ Consumption of Baby Clothing

Lars Pynt Andersen, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark
Elin Sorensen, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark
Marianne Babiel Kjaer, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

1.9 Guilt and Other Negative Emotions

Session Chair: Debra Basil, University of Lethbridge, Canada

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Imene Becheur, Wesford Business School Grenoble, France
Hayan Dib, Wesford Business School Grenoble, France
Dwight Merunka, University Paul Cezanne, IAE Aix and Euromed Marseille, France
Pierre Valette-Florence, University Pierre Mendes France, IAE and CERAG Grenoble

Guilt Decreasing Marketing Communication: An Unexplored Appeal

Isabella Soscia, Università Bocconi and SDA Bocconi School of Management, Italy
Bruno Busacca, Università Bocconi and SDA Bocconi School of Management, Italy
Ester Pitrelli, PepsiCo, Italy

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Samuel K. Bonsu, York University, Canada
Kelley J. Main, York University, Canada
Sarah J.S. Wilner, York University, Canada
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**The Evocative Power of Things. Materiality, Temporality and Value in the Consumption of Used Objects**

Session Chair: Liz Parsons, Keele University, UK
Discussion Leader: Lorna Stevens, University of Ulster, UK

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*Living History: Biographical Objects and the Powerful Presence of the Past*
Pauline Maclaran, University of Keele, UK
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*Dealing in Histories: Durability, Authenticity and Provenance in Markets for Antiques*
Liz Parsons, Keele University, UK

1.11  **Consumer Response to Promotions I**

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Theorizing the Socio-historical and Ideological Influences on the Production of Commercial Culture

Session Chair: Craig Thompson, University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA
Discussion Leader: Søren Askegaard, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

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**Transformative Consumer Research: Getting Research Out of the Tower and Into Consumers’ Lives**

Co-Chairs: Ekant Veer, University of Bath, UK
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Discussion Leader: Darach Turley, Dublin City University, Ireland

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“It’s sort of comical how you think that you’ve made a choice that exempts you from the fashion industry”: Fashion and Consumer Agency, Revisited

Session Chair: Diego Rinallo, Università Bocconi, Italy

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**Parallel Sessions 2.14-2.18**

1:30-3:00pm

2.14 Special Session:

On the Parenthood Path: Consumption Experiences During Role Transitions

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Discussion Leader: Darach Turley, Dublin City University, Ireland

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Katarina Hellen, Hanken-Swedish School of Economics, Finland
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Christian Gronroos, Hanken-Swedish School of Economics, Finland

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Thorsten Posselt, University of Wuppertal, Germany

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2.16 Roundtable:
Interrogating Fashion: Fashion Cultures and Fashion Discourses

Chair: Annamma (Jamy) Joy, JMSB, Canada and Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong

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Annamma Joy, University of British Columbia, Canada and The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

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Alladi Venkatesh, University of California, Irvine, USA
A. Fuat Firat, University of Texas—Pan American, USA
Gabriele Troilo, Università Bocconi and SDA Bocconi School of Management, Italy
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  - Priscilla Y. L. Chan, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong

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- The Influence of Self-Congruity, Brand Personality and Brand Performance on Store Loyalty
  - Dirk Morschett, Saarland University, Saarbruecken, Germany
  - Hanna Schramm-Klein, Saarland University, Saarbruecken, Germany
  - Frank Hälsig, University of Trier, Trier, Germany
  - Magali Jara, University of Rennes 1, Rennes, France

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  - Paolo Giovanni Conti, CartaSi S.p.A., Italy

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FRIDAY, JULY 13

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Popular Music, Between the Margins and the Market

Session chairs: Alan Bradshaw, University of Exeter, UK
Avi Shankar, University of Bath, UK
Discussion Leader: Douglas Brownlie, University of Stirling, UK

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Nike’s Revolution and Intentionality
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Session Chair: Tiffany Barnett White, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA
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Session Chair: Avi Shankar, University of Bath, UK
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Co-Chairs: Shona Bettany, University of Bradford, UK  
Helen R. Woodruffe-Burton, St. Martin’s College University of Lancaster, UK

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EACR Film Festival Summary
Russell Belk, York University
Robert Kozinets, York University

The 2007 European ACR Film Festival in Milan was the second, following the first held two years earlier in Goteborg, Sweden. The number of entries doubled and so, in our subjective opinion, did the quality of the entries. Two videos were awarded special Film Festival Prizes: 1) the People’s Choice Award went to Empowering Citizen-Consumer: Striving to Reduce Maternal Deaths and Morbidity in Pakistan by Marylouise Caldwell and Paul Henry, University of Sydney, Australia, and 2) The Jurors’ Award of Merit went to Belonging, Consumption, and Place: How an Eastern European researcher tries to understand her research in a South Eastern suburb of London by Marta Rabikowska and Mathew Hawkins, University of East London. As the case of film-makers and film-making topics and locations suggests, the ACR Film Festivals continue to attract a diverse and interesting array of topics. Filmmakers and film locations spanned four continents and topics ranged from immigrants, consumer protests, religion versus fashion, and maternal deaths to heavy metal, luxury consumption, car use, sports fans, and hoarding.

It is gratifying for us to see a continued spirit of experimentation in consumer film research and the increasing sophistication of the films submitted to the ACR Film Festivals (which have now been held at European, North American, Asia-Pacific, and Latin American ACRs). The peer review process for these film festivals provides feedback to all films submitted, whether they are accepted or not. It was also very good to see one previously rejected film that benefited from prior feedback and was accepted into this year’s EACR Film Festival. In the visual spirit of the Film Festivals, we include visual stills with most of the film abstracts that follow from this year’s Festival.

ABSTRACTS

1. Headbanging: Resistance or Refuge
   Paul Henry, University of Sydney, Australia
   Marylouise Caldwell, University of Sydney, Australia

   Widespread agreement exists that heavy metal music (HMM) enthusiasts are social deviants who needlessly express anger and engage in violent acts. Yet to what extent does this view represent reality? Theorists argue that such consumers are likely engaging in noble acts of consumer resistance or seek refuge from oppressive mainstream values (e.g., Kozinets 2002; Ozanne and Murray 1995; Thompson 2003). Participation in HMM subculture arguably provides them with means of effectively coping with feelings of alienation and disempowerment. Our video emphasizes the role of pre-adult experiences in shaping these consumer’s identities and how their multi-faceted negotiation of the dual worlds of HMM subculture and wider society contributes to life satisfaction.

2. The Water War: Toward Understanding an Anti-Corporate Movement
   Rohit Varman, Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, India
   Ram Manohar Vikas, Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, India
   Russell W. Belk, York University, Canada

   In anti-corporate and anti-consumption movements, there are attempts to create alternate discourses that center around some of the basic contradictions that exist in the dominant discourses of legitimate socio-economic practices. In this video we examine an anti-corporate struggle against Coca Cola in the village of Mehdiganj in India. We argue that in order to comprehend this anti-corporate movement it is necessary to transcend the dualism of economy and culture that divides the extant social movement theorization. In making a case for a synthesis across “new” and “old” forms of social movement theory, we further contend that it is essential to understand the contradictions that activists try to highlight and the conflicts they attempts to precipitate, in the framework of delegitimation strategies deployed by them.
3. Belonging, Consumption, and Place: How an Eastern European researcher tries to understand her research in a South Eastern suburb of London

Marta Rabikowska, University of East London, UK
Mathew Hawkins, University of East London, UK

The submitted version of the film is the result of the researcher’s everyday experience in the local environment, which shows her attempt to build a ‘home’ in a foreign country. Through her own acts of consumption and interaction with the informants, she restores her own sense of belonging in the new place of dwelling. By collecting and analyzing the stories which the informants provided, she creates her own version of the place articulated through a subjective process of editing combined with self-referential images which reveal the process of film-making and the researcher’s personal engagement (Cohen 1994). Both a textual and meta-textual level employed in the film is to accentuate the awareness of a tension between representation and ‘real life’ practices, including the practice of the research too.

To acknowledge the mutual exchange between those levels, the self-reflective visual and audiovisual ‘footnotes’ were utilized in the film, which come from the poetical articulations of the researcher and the academic texts. This approach recognizes the interconnectedness of objects, texts, images and technologies in our knowledge about consumption, space and belonging. This is to state that, unlike in Collier’s traditional approach, in this film ethnography is considered to be an aspect of research and an aspect of representation as well, while the whole research represents the narrative-based communication story constructed by the researcher (Clifford 1986). In this sense, the film also becomes an object of consumption among other products of culture like texts and objects which overlap or contradict each other in the continuous process of making collective sense of a given environment.
4. Once the Club Always the Club: Football Fans as Brand Communities?

Chris Horbel, University of Bayreuth, Germany
Bastien Popp, University of Bayreuth, Germany
Herbert Woratschek, University of Bayreuth, Germany

In this film we propose that football games can be interpreted as manifestations of the sports club brand that stimulate social interaction between fans who are members of the brand interest group of the sports club. Games are events that allow the fans to sensually experience the cultural meaning of the sports club brand.

Results suggest that the community of fan tourists shares a lot of similarities with brand communities. In order to ensure loyalty of their fans sports clubs managers must find ways to contribute to the process of community building by creating the context in which fan interaction occurs.

5. Trash is in the Eye of the Beholder: A Study of Hoarders & Their Attachments to Possessions

Tressa Ponner, University of Sydney, Australia
Hélène Cherrier, University of Sydney, Australia

In a society where buying new products is cheaper and easier than repairing, it is not surprising that much of consumer behavior has focused on the pleasures associated to a ‘throw away society’. Intriguingly, informants in this study spoke about the utter joy they received in finding, keeping and passing on objects. They defined themselves as functional hoarders, individuals who accumulate objects privately and are unable to dispose without clear conscious motivation or control. Through the use of video ethnography the dynamic nature of possession attachment and its obstruction to disposal practices is illuminated.
6. Empowering Citizen-Consumers: Striving to Reduce Maternal Deaths and Morbidity in Pakistan

Marylouise Caldwell, University of Sydney, Australia
Paul Henry, University of Sydney, Australia

This film highlights the complexities of empowering the citizen-consumer by implementing reform in the public obstetric/gynaecological health care sector of Pakistan. Every year approximately 35,000 women die from pregnancy related complications and 375,000 suffer severe post-natal injuries. These figures place Pakistan’s maternal death and morbidity rates as the highest in South Asia. The film’s narrative is largely conveyed and enacted by Dr Shershah Syed, Secretary General of the Pakistan Medical Association, who together with other activists, is trying to empower citizen-consumers by providing medical procedures to impoverished women living in urban slums and rural areas, and educating them regarding their rights as citizen-consumers.
In U.S. cultural ideology cars have been understood as both engineered instruments of transportation and symbolic badges of identity—‘practical’ and ‘status’ strands of understanding that have been both elaborated and over-determined through advertising and brand discourses. While symbolic categories of safety, nature, luxury, family and, more recently, green-ness have also loomed large in the discourses of car positioning and advertising (or ‘defining what cars are’), cars have still been implicitly viewed as objects of consumption rather than sites for consumption. We would like to refract this understanding of cars through an ethnographic excursion/video of life in cars and show the ways that cars are themselves sites of and for consumption. Moreover, our goal is to show ways that cars are sites of living that, like homes or workplaces, are engineered spaces that become symbolic places, constituted through the practices of everyday life.

Miller (2001a) has argued that the spaces behind the closed doors of homes were an understudied setting for both theorizing material culture and for understanding the ways in which the transformation of home and social relations were interdependent. Similarly, Miller (2001b) has also argued that while much of contemporary human life is mediated by the car, the day-to-day experience lived in and around this physical expression of cultural life has been understudied (see also Urry 2003). Without reducing the car simply to a metaphor of home (a frequently invoked, but misleading analogy), one can note that cars are also, ‘closed doors,’ that like homes, are organic sites in which the personal, private, social and public are negotiated, constrained by both the engineered space and the participants involved. Our goal in this ethnographic video is to build on these insights and to motivate cultural analysis surrounding cars. Our ultimate objective is to show the ways cars frame life and social relations and thereby show the value of cars as a site for the cultural analysis of consumption.

The video, organized in five sections, draws from video diaries and ethnographic interviews from several studies we have done in recent years. The first of these sections, approximately 10 minutes in length, serves as an overview of cars as sites of consumption and sites of life. Comprised of a medley of segments from a number of different consumers’ video diaries, this section shows the extent and variety of consumption and life activities that take place within the context of the car as well as shows consumers’ self-conscious articulation and awareness of these activities brought to the fore in the course of creating their video diaries. Following this are two short segments, each of which feature the activities of one individual. Using these ethnographic encounters focused on consumption activities
in and around cars as fodder (experienced in the course of research projects on other consumer categories, not cars), we ask viewers to consider what examining the details of cars as consumption sites would teach us about life today. We ask viewers to consider these questions in terms of the consumption of products as well as experience. For instance, what if we considered cars as sites of creative performance and possibility?

The last two sections, each featuring a person’s ‘family’ interactions in the context of cars (one in a minivan and the other a pickup truck), interrogate vehicles as life sites through the lens of emotion. We ask viewers to consider how everyday emotions are framed by life in vehicles as well as what we might miss if we do not consider the ways emotional lives frame life in cars. In considering the material role of the car in the cultural life of emotions and social relations, we want to go beyond road rage, while also drawing inspiration from this literature (e.g., Katz 1999, Chapter 1; Michael 2001) as well as from the literature on the sociocultural construction of emotion more generally (e.g., Hochschild 1983, Lutz 1986, and Katz 1999).

References Cited


8. Products Make Your Life Luxurious

Junko Kimura, Hosei University, Japan
Hiroshi Tanaka, Hosei University, Japan

What is luxury? This study aims to explore what is luxury means to consumers. There are two research questions in this video: Question (1) How consumers perceive luxury? What does it mean to consumers? What are the dimensions of luxury? Question (2) What are the commonalities of luxury dimensions between the US and Japan?

What do you remind of luxury? Luxury tends to be synonymous of gorgeous, deluxe, extravaganza, and so forth. Luxury things are regarded as expensive and costly for upper scale, affluent consumers. As Mr Usui of eMarketing told, luxurious things have four characteristics. (1) Specific products are automobiles, watches, shoes, and villa. (2) Its meaning is social. (3) Its function is being conspicuous and showing off to others. (4) Its monetary value is expensive. In other words, luxuriousness is created from state of goods, such as high prestigious brand. Luxurious consumption have also regarded as a type of conspicuous consumption. Luxurious items are for displaying his/her asset to other people to show how much monetary power he/she owns.

This video claims that there are other characteristics, which the previous research did not argue. One of the interesting phenomena we found was that the consumers did not explain in detail about the product. They rather explained the episodes they had related to the product. (1) Specific products are tableware, patio, vase, chest, bath tab, silverware, watches, paintings, and ornamental dishes. (2) Its meaning is personal. (3) Its function is connecting a person to her past, family, and society. (4) Its monetary value is not necessarily expensive but still somehow has a social value. Our study claims that luxurious thing needs to be consists of relevancy and social value.

The previous researches emphasized the social and objective value of luxurious possessions. This video finds that coexistence of social value and relevancy are required for a thing to be luxurious. We could find this universality in two different cultures. We need to continue the research for finding if there are any differences of factors between the US and Japan.
10. Generaciones/Generations: Cultural Identity, Memory, and the Market
Lisa Peñaloza, University of Utah, USA

In this documentary Mexican Americans in San Antonio, Texas, share their consumption and market experiences—from the blatant discrimination of the 1940’s and 50’s, to the activism of the Chicano/a rights civil rights movement in the 60’s and 70’s, to the gains of affirmative action through the 1970’s and 80’s, to the present popularity of Latino culture dubbed “Latino chic.” The film addresses a kaleidoscope of issues at the nexus of culture, consumer behavior and marketing, including identity, memory, social mobility, bilingual education, representations of Latinos/as in advertising and tourism, and the role of business in the Latina/o community.
SUMMARY

Consumer researchers have advanced our understanding of the ways consumers think about marketing managers’ tactics of persuasion (Friestedt and Wright 1995) but much less is known about the techniques, technologies, and ideologies marketing professionals employ to conceptualize and theorize about consumers. Other disciplines have been more reflective about the constructivist nature of “knowing” audiences and the role of research techniques in that construction (Ang 1991; Hall, 1998). But the important cultural and ideological work of marketers in imagining consumers has been studied to a lesser degree (for notable exceptions see Nairn et al. 2003; Lien 1997), which is surprising given the central role of marketing practice in shaping consumer culture.

Our session attempted to bridge that gap by studying the creation of customers in three different contexts: scientific, digital and international. Desroches and Marcoux analyzed how consumers are scientifically constructed and examined in the haircolor department of L’Oréal, in Paris. More specifically their ethnographic study examines how consumers are described, represented and depicted by managers throughout the product development process. Their study unveils the relation between the marketing department and the science laboratory, as well as the reification of consumers that emerges as a result. Desroches and Marcoux’s study uses the product development process as a template for the analysis of the interplay between the social actors and the material culture of knowledge. Drawing on contemporary material culture studies inspired by Latour and Woolgar’s ethnography of the science lab, they seek to examine critically, and reflexively, the making of consumers in a global corporation.

Turning to the digital construction of consumers, Zwick and Denegri-Knott elaborated on the ways database technologies have transformed marketing into an act of production where what is manufactured and sold are customized customers. The authors propose the concept of bioproduction to argue that the commodification of customers increasingly trumps the production of goods and services as mode of value creation in post-Fordism. Hence, database marketing emerges as the latest trend in marketing practice in shaping consumer culture. Bioproduction allows the re-theorization of the popular notion of creation and enables all of life to be mapped as consumer space. By casting the customer database in this light, the concept of bioproduction allows the re-theorization of the popular notion of customer co-creation as the most advanced form of consumer exploitation.

Cayla and Peñaloza focused on the stories marketers develop about consumers in international contexts. Drawing from extended ethnographic fieldwork in the Indian corporate world, their study uncovers elements of the marketing worldview taking consumers as its subject matter as they diffuse through the circulation of marketing practices and discourse. Required to imagine consumers and markets for the development of specific positioning, pricing and targeting strategies, international marketers are shown to mobilize specific assumptions and interpretive frameworks that overlay in complex ways other forms of market research. One of the most prominent and troublesome assumptions is the idea that the third world inevitably follows in the footsteps of the first world. Cayla and Peñaloza examine how the multifaceted interactions between MNCs and their local advertising agencies function as a central site of the diffusion of marketing ideology.

Our discussant, Jonathan Schroeder, ended the session by establishing the similarities between these three studies. He emphasized that they all tried, in different ways to “reclaim the marketing department” by making the practices and discourses their object of study. Through the study of consumer constructions in different professional and cultural contexts, these studies help document what we call the culture of marketing. Put differently, by taking an anthropological approach to the study of marketing, we excavate some of the profession’s manifold ideological and technological workings that combine to make up today’s customers as culturally significant targets for marketing’s strategic interventions. We believe that because the practice of marketing has become a taken-for-granted ideological institution advancing its objectives with what is widely regarded as a universal set of techniques, de-naturalizing its operational logic to permit the recognition of marketers as central agents in the production of markets and constitution of consumers is difficult. Yet, this is precisely what we need to do if we are to understand the larger social and cultural implications of marketing practice in the production of consumer cultures around the globe.

Selected References

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The importance of the Internet has been growing steadily in recent years, increasing the need to understand the consequences of Internet consumption on consumers. One aspect that has received the most attention in marketing and consumer research to date is Internet retailing or e-commerce (e.g., Grewal, Iyer and Levy 2004). In the Internet environment (relative to bricks-and-mortar), consumers can search relatively more easily for product and price information, as well as purchase from a seller without geographical restrictions (e.g., see Underhill 2000). Beyond convenience and value for customers created by online buying and information search, the Internet also offers convenience and ease in other consumer activities, such as entertainment (e.g., recreational shopping, online gaming, music, avatars, etc.; Bloch, Sherrell and Ridgway 1986; Holzwarth, Janiszewski and Neumann 2006; Mathwick and Rigdon 2004), personal and business communication and interaction (e.g., instant messaging, e-mail), socializing (e.g., participation in social networking websites, such as MySpace or Facebook, and other virtual communities; Angwin 2006; Bagozzi and Dholakia 2002; Marketing Week 2006), and financial management (Strader and Ramaswami 2004), among others, without consumers ever having to leave the comfort of their home or office.

The Internet can also be very engrossing, allowing consumers to experience a feeling of “flow” (i.e., engrossed in the moment and unaware of all else; Csikszentmihalyi 1990; Hoffman and Novak 1996). While these online features can be perceived as benefits that the Internet offers to consumers, at the same time these characteristics may breed dependency and may consequently result in negative consequences for online users. Thus, usage of technology such as the Internet may require consumers to face and cope with the contradiction of the Internet causing them harm and benefiting them at the same time, the so-called “paradox of technology” (Mick and Fournier 1998). The concept of paradox focuses on the idea that two opposite extremes can simultaneously exist, for example, technology can lead to freedom and dependence at the same time. Mick and Fournier (1998) developed a conceptual framework on the paradoxes of technology and identified eight paradoxes consumers face when encountering and using technological products.

Consumption of Internet technology is likely to result in consumers experiencing similar paradoxes. The innately positive characteristics of the Internet are likely to be associated with the dark-side, negative counterparts, which may lead to negative effects of the Internet on consumers. Therefore, the objective of the present research is to uncover a myriad of negative consequences associated with Internet consumption. The conceptual framework on paradoxes of technology is used to link the individual identified negative effects to the specific technological paradoxes.

Twenty-one in-depth interviews were conducted with the purpose of investigating the identified issues. The respondents included ten females and eleven males. Eleven were undergraduate students and ten were adults in the work force (i.e., post-graduation). The average age of the undergraduate student participants was 21.5 years, and the average age of the working adults was 33 years (range 21–55 years). The interviews lasted on average about an hour, were recorded and transcribed afterwards. The main categories investigated in the interviews included behavioral, economic, social, psychological, physical and legal consequences of Internet consumption (Clark and Frith 2005). Under each broad category, several themes were identified and are illustrated in the paper with a sample of verbatim comments from the consumers.

Negative behavioral consequences associated with Internet consumption the respondents brought up during the interviews included impulsive buying (i.e., making unplanned or unneeded purchases), excessive buying (i.e., buying too much), losing track of time while online, poor time management and lost productivity due to the time spent online, and procrastination of more important activities.

The main economic consequence that emerged from the interviews pertained to the consumers reporting spending and losing more money because of their Internet consumption. Actions leading to such monetary losses included getting caught up in a bidding frenzy and consequently paying more than planned in an online auction, gambling online, paying exorbitant shipping charges when buying and returning products purchased online, buying more than planned and/or more than necessary, frequent stock trading, etc. Some participants also perceived it harder to keep track of money spent when buying online.

Social/interpersonal consequences included interpersonal conflicts and misunderstandings resulting from electronic communications due to the lack of face-to-face contact and non-verbal cues. Electronic communication was also seen as replacing the more personal in-person communication and preventing the participants from carrying on a meaningful conversation.

Negative psychological consequences of Internet consumption included experiencing feelings of stress, loneliness, lower perceptions of self-worth, decreased ability to think, becoming more introverted, becoming dependent on and/or addicted to the Internet, and experiencing withdrawal symptoms when not being able to access it.

Moreover, the most frequent physical problems associated with Internet usage the interviewees reported included headaches, poor posture leading to backaches, problems with eyesight (sore, dry eyes), lack of sleep leading to tiredness, development of poor eating habits, and a decrease in physical activity.

Lastly, the key negative legal or ethical consequences of Internet consumption pertained to the respondents experiencing violations or concerns regarding the online security and privacy of their information.

Implications of these findings and directions for future research on the topic are discussed in the manuscript.
The Relationships among e-Service Quality, Value, Satisfaction and Loyalty in Online Shopping

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ABSTRACT

Since the online market has been growing rapidly over the past several years, e-commerce marketing activities have drawn a lot of attention. The main purpose of the study is to develop a comprehensive research model of explaining the user’s online shopping behavior. Empirical analyses are performed using structural equations modeling analysis and results indicated that e-service quality would not affect the on-line shopping customer loyalty directly but indirectly through the mediation of perceived value and customer satisfaction. And perceived value would not only affect the customer loyalty directly but also indirectly through the mediation of customer satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

The business-to-customer (B-to-C) online market has been growing rapidly over the past several years. Reichheld & Schefter (2000) survey shows that consumers have increasingly favored online shopping. In the consumer marketing community, customer loyalty has long been regarded as an important goal. According to Taiwan Market Intelligence Center industry analysis (2006), online shopping market in Taiwan amounted to $39.8 billion last year with 54% growth rate compared to former year. Growth rate forecast for this year is 50%, with sales amount to $ 89.3 billion, and might be up to $131.1 billion next year. Numerous studies have pointed out that two of the more effective means of generating customer loyalty are to delight customers (Oliver, 1999) and to deliver superior value derived from excellent services and quality products (Parasuraman and Grewal, 2000).

Similar to a retail storefront, the electronic service quality (e-SQ) provides significant information and feeling to current and prospective target-market customers. Thus, if the service can achieve what users want in a website is an important area of study. Developing a website that is responsive to user needs is critical for all site designers and managers. For website retailer to be successful and for customers to be satisfied, excellent e-service quality is essential. There are several factors to be considered, including the website design, reliability, security, and customer value (Wolfinbarger and Gilly, 2002; Aladwani and Palvia, 2002). Furthermore, it would be interesting to determine if these characteristics of the e-service quality have a potential influence on customer satisfaction.

Several researchers have attempted to confirm the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty in their research (Woodside, Frey, & Daley, 1989; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Oliver, 1999). The relationship seems almost intuitive, however, the strength of the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty has been found to vary significantly under different conditions (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003).

Customer perceived value has recently gained much attention from marketers and researchers because of the important role it plays in predicting purchase behavior and achieving sustainable competitive advantage (Zeithaml, 1988; Bolton & Drew, 1991; Parasuraman, 1997). Customer Perceived value involves “A ‘get’ component—i.e., the benefits a buyer derives from a seller’s offering—and a ‘give’ component—i.e., the buyer’s monetary and nonmonetary costs in acquiring the offering”.

Researchers have also established a positive relationship between perceived value and intention to purchase/repurchase (Dodds, Monroe, & Grewal, 1991; Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000). When the perceived value is low, customer will be more inclined to switch to competing businesses in order to increase perceived value, thus contributing to a decline in loyalty. Even satisfied customers are unlikely to repurchase on the same website, if they feel that they are not getting the best value for their give. Instead, they will seek out other websites in an ongoing effort to find a better value (Anderson and Srinivasan, 2003).

It is only a mouse click away in electronic commerce (e-commerce) settings, so it is critical that companies understand how to build customer loyalty in online marketing. Since the e-service quality and customer perceived value of Internet Websites are regarded as the key influential factors for Internet marketing, a more detailed evaluation of e-service quality and customer perceived value may become a necessity. Although previous studies have recommended the importance of perceived quality in experiential marketing, few studies have empirically developed a framework to measure the e-service quality and value of experiential marketing in Internet Websites and distinctly interpreted the effect of different level of customer satisfaction and perceived value on the customer loyalty. We hope this study will add a little to the understanding of electronic commerce.

There are two objectives in this study. First, this study identified key antecedents that are likely to influence customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in online shopping environments. Secondly, this study integrated relevant literature and develop a comprehensive research model of experiential marketing to explain the user’s online shopping behavior.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

E-Service Quality

The Internet remains a critical channel for selling most goods and services (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, Malhotra, 2002). Today, the most successful electronic commerce companies are beginning to realize that not only low price and web presence were initially but also the delivering of the high e-service quality became important (Yang and Jun, 2002; Zeithaml, Parasuraman, Malhotra, 2002). The first formal definition of web site service quality or electric service quality (e-SQ) was provided by Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Malhotra (2001). Zeithaml et al.(2001) defined e-SQ as the extent to which a web site facilitates efficient and effective shopping, purchasing, and delivery of products and services. The online shopping can fulfill several consumers’ needs more effectively and more efficiently compared with the conventional shopping (Grewal, Iyer, and Levy, 2004; Monsuwé et al. 2004). Online customers thus expect equal or higher levels of service quality than traditional channels customers (Lee and Lin, 2005). Therefore, many academic researchers in online shopping have recently focused on the e-service quality to attract potential customers and on how to retain current customers (Jun et al., 2004). As a result, a fundamental understanding of factors impacting online customer satisfaction is
of great importance to electronic commerce (McKinney et al. 2002).

Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty

Oliver (1997) stated that satisfaction is a summary psychological state resulting when the emotion surrounding disconfirmed expectations is coupled with the consumer’s prior feelings about the consumption experience. Kotler (2000) also expresses that satisfaction is a person’s feelings of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product’s perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to his or her expectations. Many researchers explored the role of satisfaction in the electronic commerce. Anderson and Srinivasan (2003) investigate electronic commerce and defined e-satisfaction as the contentment of the customer with respect to his or her prior purchasing experience with a given electronic commerce firm. McKinney et. al (2002) posited that web-customer satisfaction has two distinctive sources-satisfaction with the quality of web-site’s information content and satisfaction with the website’s system performance in delivering information. Based on the definitions in this literature, we here define customer satisfaction as “the psychological reaction of the customer with respect to his or her prior experience with comparison between expected and perceived performance”.

Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell (1982) defined brand loyalty as the preferential, attitudinal and behavioral response toward one or more brands in a product category expressed over a period of time by a consumer”. Anderson and Srinivasan (2003) investigate the electronic commerce and defined customer loyalty as “the customer’s favorable attitude toward an electronic business resulting in repeat buying behavior”. Based on this literature, we here adopt a definition of customer loyalty as “A commitment of repeat buying a preferred product/service and positive word of mouth consistently in the future”.

Parasuraman et al. (1985, 1988) specifically suggested that service quality is an antecedent of customer satisfaction. Several studies have modeled service quality as an antecedent to behavioral intentions and found a significant link (Bitner, 1990; Boulding et al., 1993; Zeithaml et al., 1996). Website quality has been demonstrated to significantly influence consumers’ online shopping attitudes and behavior. Better website quality can guide the consumer’s complete transactions smoothly and attract them to revisit this internet store (Li and Zhang, 2002). Szymanski and Hise (2000) found that aspects associated with product information and web site design are important determinants in forming customer satisfaction. Satisfaction is a necessary prerequisite for loyalty but is not sufficient on its own to automatically lead to repeat purchases or brand loyalty (Bloemer and Kasper, 1995). A dissatisfied customer is more likely to search for information on alternatives and more likely to yield to competitor overtures than is a satisfied customer (Anderson and Srinivasan, 2003). Based on this relationship among e-service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty, we propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: E-Service quality will have an impact on customer satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: E-Service quality will have an impact on customer loyalty.

Hypothesis 3: Customer satisfaction will have an impact on customer loyalty.

Customer Perceived Value

Customer value represents the trade-off between the quality, or benefits, the customer receives and the costs, such as monetary, energy, time and psychic transaction costs, the customer incurs by evaluating, obtaining and using a product (Kotler, 1977). Zeithaml (1988) defined the perceived value as the consumer’s overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given. Keeney (1999) defined the value proposition associated with internet commerce as the net value of the benefits and cost of both a product and the processes of finding, ordering, and receiving it. Based on a synthesis of previous definitions, perceived customer value is defined here as “a consumer’s perception of the net benefits based on perception of what is received and what is given.” Lindgreen and Wynstra (2005) think that customer value has at least two dimensions . The first of these deals with the value of the (augmented) goods and services, while the second one focuses on the value of buyer–seller relationships. In this paper we focus on the value of the (augmented) goods and services.

Choia et al. (2004) postulated that value perceptions of medical services will be directly influenced by perceived service quality. Perceived value contributes to the loyalty of an electronic business by reducing an individual’s need to seek alternative service providers (Anderson and Srinivasan, 2003). In electronic commerce, offering low customer transaction costs creates customer value, increases firm performance and contributes to competitive advantage (Chiruc and Mahajan, 2006). In other words, When the perceived value is low, customers will be more inclined to switch to competing businesses in order to increase perceived value, thus contributing to a decline in loyalty (Anderson and Srinivasan, 2003). Based on above relationship, we propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4: E-Service quality will have an impact on customer perceived value.

Hypothesis 5: Customer perceived value will have an impact on customer satisfaction.

Hypothesis 6: Customer perceived value will have an impact on customer loyalty.

METHODOLOGY

Research Model

This research proposed an integrative model to explain the user’s online shopping behavior which based on established relationships among e-service quality (web site design, reliability, security and customer service), customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and customer perceived value (presented in Figure 1). The model of this research is based on Fornell’s et al. (1996) customer satisfaction index (CSI) model which measure the antecedents of overall customer satisfaction- expectations, perceived quality, and value and the consequences of overall customer satisfaction- voice and loyalty.

Measures

In order to measure the various constructs, validated items used by other researchers were adapted. The various dimensions of the e-service quality were talk about. Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2002) developed a scale named .comQ. And Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Malhotra (2002, 2005) developed the E-S-QUAL and E-RecS-QUAL for measuring the service quality delivered by Web sites on which customers shop online. In this research, we found the two scales have many similar aspects and combine them as our measurable variables of e-service quality with four dimensions: web site design, reliability, security, and customer service. Customer perceived value was assessed with two items based on the perceived
utility/worth resulting from the trade-off of “get’ versus ‘give-up’” (Zeithaml, 1988). In this paper, we measure customer perceived value by the scale from Dodds, Monroe and Grewal (1991), Anderson and Srinivasan (2003). Customer satisfaction was assessed by adapting the scale developed by Oliver (1980) and Anderson and Srinivasan (2003). Lastly, customer loyalty was evaluated by using scale items adapted from Berry and Parasuraman (1996) and Anderson and Srinivasan (2003) and Yang and Peterson (2004). Each items was used 7-point Likert scales ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. A questionnaire initially including 29 items was generated, consisting of 14 items for e-service quality, 3 items for customer satisfaction, 8 items for customer loyalty and 4 items for customer perceived value.

**Pilot Test**

This study evaluated the results of the pilot test by using Cronbach’s reliability and exploratory factor analysis. The three statements were deleted after the pilot test. Ultimately, a final 26-item survey questionnaire contained four parts including 14 items for e-service quality, 3 items for customer satisfaction, 8 items for customer loyalty and 4 items for customer perceived value.

**Data Collection**

In order to measure reliability and validity, a pretest was conducted. A pilot test of the measures was conducted by 70 respondents who were asked to provide comments on the relevance and wording of the questionnaire items and adjusted based on their comments. In the formal questionnaire, the data were gathered through Internet questionnaire of Chungwa Telecom Co., Ltd in Taiwan. For the final survey, a total of 350 survey questionnaires were collected from respondents who had online shopping experience. 20 invalid questionnaires were eliminated and 330 questionnaires retained for analysis. The response rate is 94.3%. Online questionnaire also confirm that our sample have experiences to use internet. In the aggregate sample, 44.8% of respondents are men and 55.2% are women. More than 85% of the respondents are Y generation people defined as people born among 1976 to 1985. Almost 95% of the respondents’ education is at institute/college level and above. 45.7% of the respondents are students and 54.3% are workers. Approximately 48.6% of the respondents use the Internet more than 20 hours each week. In disposable income, about 71.1% of the respondents have less than 10,000 dollars per month. More than 67% of respondents pay for Internet purchases by credit card or ATM transfer account. Besides, the respondents also show some interesting characteristics. The top three products purchased online in our study are computer equipment (100), books (87), and clothes (79).

**DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

**Validity and Reliability**

We adopted confirmatory factor analyzes to verify the reliability and validity of the measurement model. Reliability and Convergent validity of the constructs were estimated by composite reliability and average variance extracted. All of the factor loadings of the items in the research model were greater than 0.05 (see Table 1), with most of them above 0.70. The composite reliability were all above the recommended 0.7 level (Hair, 1997). Finally, convergent validity can assessed by the average extracted variances were all above the recommended 0.5 level (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black, 1992). Therefore, all constructs in the model had adequate reliability and convergent validity.

**Structural Model**

The purpose of this study is to find out the relationships among e-service quality, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and customer perceived value. The causal relationship of all the variables in the proposed research model was tested using structure
equation modeling (SEM) as performed in LISREL8.52 software.

The goodness-of-fit indices for our testing model are as following:

Chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio is 3, GFI is 0.922, AGFI is 0.882, NFI is 0.962, CFI is 0.973, RMR is 0.052 and RMSEA is 0.083 which are all within the accepted thresholds as suggested in the literature. Thus, we ensure that our research model is adequate representation of the entire set of causal relationship.

Tests of Hypotheses

Most of the proposed hypotheses were supported except for H2 (E-service quality → Customer loyalty)(see Table 1). E-service quality has significant impact on customer satisfaction (γ= 0.65, t-value=8.09) and customer perceived value (γ=0.74, t-value=11.47). But e-service quality has not significant impact on customer loyalty (γ= 0.29, t-value=1.74). Moreover, customer satisfaction has significant impact on customer loyalty (γ= 0.84, t-value=4.81). Therefore, results of the analysis supported H1, H3, and H4. These results indicated that e-service quality would not affect their on-line shopping customer loyalty directly but indirectly through the mediation of perceived value and customer satisfaction. Finally, customer perceived value has significant impact on customer satisfaction (β= 0.332, t-value=4.812) and customer loyalty (β= 0.341, t-value=3.595). Therefore, results of the analysis supported H5 and H6. These results are in conformity with the theories of experiential consumer behavior.

CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Conclusions

This study was intended to make contributions to the current understanding of online shopping consumer behavior in two ways. First, this study identified key antecedents that are likely to influence customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in online shopping environments. The results showed that e-service quality (web site design, reliability, security, and customer service) would not affect their on-line shopping customer loyalty directly but indirectly through the mediation of perceived value and customer satisfaction. Therefore, to enhance customer perceived value and customer satisfaction, online stores should start improving the design of web site, providing accurate service, strengthening the security of online transactions, and helping customer to solve problems.

Second, we proposed an integrative model to explain the user’s online shopping behavior which based on established relationships among e-service, quality, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and customer perceived value.

Most of past studies of online consumer behavior have focused on the links among service quality. Although the crucial importance of customer perceived value in the online shopping environment, previous studies have been neglected that variable. In this research, the results showed that perceived value would not only affect the
customer loyalty directly but also indirectly through the mediation of customer satisfaction. Because perceived value is conceptualized as the consumer’s evaluation of the utility of perceived benefits and perceived sacrifices (Zeithaml, 1988), we suggested that online stores should try to raise the benefits (such as good, services, personnel, and image value) and reduce the sacrifices (such as monetary, energy, time and psychic transaction costs).

**Limitations**

There are several limitations of this research that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, replication of this research in different business and settings such as Business-to-Business in both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies could also help extend the validity of these findings. Second, besides customer perceived value, further studies might also profit form focusing on a wider range of variables, possibly exploring the effect of involvement, convenience orientation, and switch cost etc. In addition, a more comprehensive model might be developed. Finally, repurchase intention and word of mouth (WOM) were integrated into customer loyalty. However, some studies have shown that marketing programs can have different effects on different customer behaviors. It would therefore be interesting to conduct further research to examine the different behaviors of customer loyalty.

**REFERENCES**


The Spillover Effect in e-WOM
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Word of mouth (WOM) is informal advice between people about goods, services, and social issues (East 2005). Others’ opinions have been always considered by customers in order to create their own opinions. As digital environment become more popular, there is a growing opportunity of telling others about either particularly pleasant products or about unsatisfied consumer experiences. Electronic WOM (e-WOM) can be defined as any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet (Henning-Thurau et al. 2004). It differs from traditional WOM in many aspects: the new interpersonal influence is a many to many communication process in which the source is unknown and the non-commercial focus may not be certain, the contact is electronic, not face to face, and the volume of information is higher than obtained through traditional process (Chatterjee 2001; Gershoff et al. 2001; Henning-Thurau et al. 2004; Sen and Lerman 2005; Smith et al. 2005; Zemborain and Johar 2007).

However, little is known about how consumers value others’ opinions on the Internet and if they subsequently have any influence on evaluations and purchase intentions (Chatterjee 2001; Smith et al. 2005). In addition, while there has been research focused on the antecedents of WOM behavior (Sundaram et al. 1998) and on the consequences of negative vs. positive WOM on decision making (Ahuwalia 2002; Richins 1983; Herr et al. 1991), the influence of such opinions on related products has been totally unexplored. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that this spillover effect of e-WOM exists, i.e., e-WOM about one product affects consumer opinions for other, related products. In order to demonstrate this effect we first review the literature on the topic, and then propose two hypotheses about the existence and type of influence of this spillover effect.

In the study we develop an experiment by creating three versions of the same website, one with positive opinions, one with negative ones and a third website with neutral opinions about an experiential product (a novel). An experiential product was selected for the experiment, because this category evokes many different emotional responses, thus rendering the possibility of multiple interpretations (Hoch and Ha 1986; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). The novel chosen, The Historian, was not yet commercialized in the country where we developed the experiment at the moment of data collection (September 2005). The novelty of the product was necessary because lesser expertise about a product may make people more receptive to other’s opinions (Folkes and Patrick 2003; East 2005). Five books of the same category (suspense-intrigue) were included in the section “The clients who bought this book also bought...”. Consumer opinions about these related books were used to show the spillover effect. The design and the contents of the Amazon web site were applied to an ad hoc web site specifically created for the empirical study (Koerning 2003).

Mean difference tests conducted for the three variables show that mean attitudes (3.76), purchase intentions (3.19), and recommendations of each book (2.48) are higher for the 5 books included in the section “The clients who bought this book also bought...” than for those that were not (3.67, 3.07, and 2.13, respectively) in that section. These results confirm the existence of a spillover effect towards related products derived from an e-WOM. Specifically, positive opinions about The Historian, compared to neutral opinions, significantly increase attitudes, purchase intention and recommendation of the five books included in the section “The clients who bought this book also bought...”, but these increases are not significant for the five books not included in that section. The explanation for this spillover effect comes from social psychology basics, as individuals with no information tend to make inferences about people they do not know focusing on what they know about a person that belongs to the same group (Skowronski and Carlson 1989). Similarly, products that appear in a website as bought by the same people as the product being evaluated will be considered as belonging to the same group of products.

As the negativity effect of WOM was not supported, our results are also in line with those of other studies that have questioned the negativity effect hypothesis of WOM in the case of experiential products (Folkes and Patrick 2003) or in the Internet environment (Chatterjee 2001).

The results clarify some research doubts about the influence of the e-WOM communication. Our results have not only confirmed the direct influence of others’ opinions about a product on consumer behavior, where positive evaluations shape better attitudes, purchase intentions and recommendations. We have also demonstrated that the influence of positive opinions goes beyond its direct influence on the product for which consumers opinions are available. We have demonstrated that it has also a positive effect on related products for which no other information is available.

REFERENCES
The Spillover Effect in e-WOM


ABSTRACT

Several ad-trial studies have shown that advertising can influence consumers’ subsequent trial experience, especially for low diagnostic products. In this study, the authors investigate the effect of attribute type (search versus experiential) and claim objectivity (objective versus subjective) on post-trial evaluations of a highly diagnostic product. The results indicate in general that search attribute claims result in more positive post-trial evaluations than experiential attribute claims or trial alone.

INTRODUCTION

Understanding how advertising can influence or change consumers’ product experience has been of great interest to marketers and researchers. Some have suggested that advertising transforms the consumer’s product experience, rendering it different than it might have been without the advertising information. In fact, several studies indicate that advertising can lead to more positive post-trial evaluations than those resulting from experience alone (Hoch and Ha 1986; Kempf and Lacziak 2001; Kempf and Smith 1998; Marks and Kamins 1988; Olson and Dover 1979; Shapiro and Spence 2002; Smith 1993). Research has demonstrated this effect for low diagnostic products, that is, products for which trial is not perceived as being very useful for evaluating the brand (Hoch and Ha 1986; Kempf and Smith 1998). However, for highly diagnostic products, research has found that advertising does not influence trial because the trial itself offers tangible, credible evidence of the product and its attributes (Deighton and Schindler 1988; Hoch and Ha 1986; Kempf and Smith 1998).

The effect of the advertising information has received some attention in the ad-trial literature. A key result is that a single product trial during which the product can be physically tested provides maximum information relative to experiential attributes (e.g., taste, speed, softness), whereas advertising provides maximum information for search attributes (e.g., price, ingredients, calorie content) (Wright and Lynch 1995). Another important, yet unexamined aspect of advertising information in the context of the ad-trial literature is claim objectivity (see Darley and Smith 1993; Edell and Staelin 1983; Ford, Smith, and Swinyard 1988; Holbrook 1978). Objective claims are easily verifiable because they include specific data that can be measured by a standard scale (see Edell and Staelin 1983). At the other end of the continuum, subjective claims are not easily verifiable and are subject to individual interpretations. Research indicates that objective claims are more credible than subjective claims (Ford et al. 1990; Holbrook 1978), which may be important in the context of advertising and trial. Collectively, these findings demonstrate the importance of considering attribute type, product diagnosticity, and claim objectivity in studies that observe the combined effects of advertising and product trial.

The purpose of this study is to investigate, using an experimental context, the effect of attribute type (search vs. experiential vs. no attribute) and claim objectivity (objective vs. subjective) on post-trial evaluations (i.e., expectancy value, product attitude, purchase intention, and product choice) of a highly diagnostic product.

BACKGROUND LITERATURE

The Integrated Information Response Model

The integrated information response model (IIRM) provides a useful structural approach for examining the attribute and claim effects related to consumers’ processing of ad information and product trial experience (Smith and Swinyard 1982, 1983). This approach is particularly relevant to highly diagnostic products, for which trial is not ambiguous (Smith 1993). IIRM examines consumers’ cognitive, affective, and conative reactions to product-related information provided in an advertisement and during trial (Smith and Swinyard 1982). The IIRM draws upon Fishbein and Ajzen’s (1975) expectancy value (EV) theory, which states that consumers’ expectancy that a brand has certain attributes is based on belief strength, belief confidence, and attribute evaluation (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). When a consumer reads an ad claim that Brand X is highly reliable, a correspondence belief will be formed that associates Brand X with high reliability at some level of subjective probability. If message acceptance is high, the probability of association (i.e., belief strength) will be relatively strong (i.e., close to 1); if message acceptance is low, the probability of association will be relatively weak (i.e., close to 0). Belief confidence represents one’s conviction in one’s beliefs, and attribute evaluation refers to the favorability of one’s attribute assessment. The full specification of the expectancy component of the ECV model includes a summative product of the three factors (i.e., belief strength, belief confidence, and attribute evaluation) across all attributes. Further, the derived expected value of a product is a determinant of purchase intention.

An important aspect of IIRM deals with a consumer’s attention to the advertisement. In general, IIRM states that an advertisement, because it is provided by a source with a vested interest, is apt to be met with resistance by consumers, and hence will generate weak (or “lower-order”) beliefs about the advertised brand. These weak beliefs coupled with weak affect lack sufficient expected value to create brand preferences (top line, detailed sequence, Figure 1), but they may trigger enough curiosity from customers to have them engage in product trial. Only upon trial can these weaker beliefs and affect be transformed to stronger (or “higher-order”) beliefs and affect, and result in commitment to the brand (bottom line, detailed sequence, Figure 1). Empirical tests of the IIRM in general provide evidence for superiority of trial: trial-only groups, in comparison with ad-only groups, had stronger and more confidently held beliefs, greater total expectancy, stronger brand attitudes, and higher attitude–behavior consistency (Smith and Swinyard 1983, 1988). These findings suggest that when the product attributes can be directly evaluated by trial, pre-trial advertising-based beliefs will lose their significance. Smith and Swinyard (1983) exposed participants to advertising claims that focused on experiential attributes of a salted snack food item that could be tested during trial. Thus, absence of an advertising effect may have been driven by the lack of information that is otherwise unavailable during trial (e.g., search attribute information).
Under certain circumstances (e.g., in the presence of a credible endorser or of a two-sided versus one-sided message), the acceptance of the advertising message can also be high, resulting in “higher-order” beliefs and affect (the dashed line, Figure 1), which will still have a significant weight in evaluating the product after trial. According to previous research in advertising and trial, higher-order beliefs may result if advertising is conveying information about search rather than experiential attributes (Wright and Lynch 1995), expressed in objective rather than subjective terms (see Darley and Smith 1993; Edell and Staelin 1983; Holbrook 1978).

Smith and Swinyard’s IIRM model (1982) leaves many questions unanswered. For example, “while the model identifies the possibility of higher-order beliefs resulting from exposure to advertising, it does little to predict when this particular pattern will be traversed” (Smith and Swinyard 1982, p. 91). Our focus is on the joint advertising effects of attribute type and claim objectivity on post-trial evaluation.

The Attribute Type and Claim Objectivity

Research has distinguished between types of attributes, including characteristic/beneficial/image attributes (Lekhoff-Hagius and Mason 1993), tangible/intangible attributes (Darley and Smith 1993), and search/experience/credence attributes (Nelson 1974). The key difference between search and experiential attributes concerns the consumers’ need to try the product to assess the validity of the information related to that attribute (Wright and Lynch 1995). Information about search attributes (e.g., ingredients, price) can be collected and reliably interpreted from labels, advertising, and word-of-mouth, without having to try the product (Darby and Karni 1973; Wright and Lynch 1995). Experience attributes (e.g., taste of a candy bar and sound of a stereo system), on the other hand, can be assessed only by directly experiencing the product.

Another important consideration is the type of claims used in advertisements. Ford et al. (1990) define objective claims as describing “some feature of the product that is measured in a standard way,” and subjective claims as “some feature of the product that is not measured in a standard way.” Other researchers use different labels to refer to the objectivity of advertising claims, such as factual/evaluative (Holbrook 1978), rational/emotional (Atkin 1979), concrete/abstract (Debrevec, Meyers, and Chan 1985), and factual/impressionistic (Darley and Smith 1993). Despite the numerous labels and definitions, a common element across studies is the verifiability of the information presented in the ad. On one hand, objective claims are easily verifiable because they include specific data that can be measured by a standard scale, which is not subject to individual interpretation (Atkin 1979; Debrevec, Meyers, and Chan 1984; Edell and Staelin 1983; Holbrook 1978). At the other end of the continuum, subjective claims are not easily verifiable and are subject to individual interpretations. For example, an advertising message that includes objective claims about a car’s attributes would read: “a purchase price starting at $15,000, 27 miles per gallon of regular gas, and a 6-year average life span,” whereas a subjective message would read: “a surprisingly low initial purchase price, truly excellent gasoline mileage, and a long life span.”

Ford et al. (1990) contemplated the cross-classification of two types of product attributes (search/experiential attributes) with two dimensions of claim objectivity (objective/subjective). Their results suggest that consumers are least skeptical of advertising claims about search attributes expressed in objective terms (e.g., “Buy this product for only $4.99”), because consumers can associate the brand with verifiable attributes and specific facts (see also Darley and Smith 1993). Consumers become more skeptical of subjective claims about search attributes (“Buy this product at an extremely low price”), which are relatively ambiguous, and hence open to more alternative interpretations by consumers. Consumers are even more skeptical of objective claims about experiential

[FIGURE 1]
Integrated Information Response Model

Note: Figure adapted from Smith and Swinyard (1982)
attributes (e.g., “[...] carpeting will not mildew or rot for at least three years”). Finally, consumers are most skeptical of subjective claims about experiential attributes (e.g., “[the automobile repair service] treats you fairly time after time”).

**HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

In this section, we develop the theoretical bases for hypothesizing that advertising information (i.e., search attribute claim; experiential attribute claim; no claim) can affect consumers’ reaction to a subsequent trial experience with highly diagnostic products, and that the nature of advertising claims (i.e., objective/subjective claims about search/experiential attributes) impacts post-trial evaluations.

In the context of a highly diagnostic product, according to IIRM, trial experience forms a strong belief base because it is processed directly through the senses. “Since the validity of one’s own senses is rarely questioned, these [...] beliefs are, at least initially, held with maximal certainty” (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975, p. 132). When advertising information is consistent with that of trial (e.g., both advertising and trial provide positive information about the product), trial beliefs will be more confidently held than those related to advertising, in which case the total expectancy from advertising-plus-trial should not differ from that produced by trial alone (as predicted by IIRM). Research suggests that an advertising presenting experiential attribute information prior to the trial does not add information that is otherwise inaccessible at trial (Hoch and Ha 1986; Kempf and Smith 1998).

Consumers generally form positive beliefs and affect toward a product after exposure to advertising, which will predispose customers to evaluate the product’s experiential attributes favorably during trial. If the pre-trial ad presents search attribute information, the post-trial evaluations will incorporate both search (conveyed by the pre-trial ad) and experiential (collected personally during trial) attribute information. Because belief confidence is a function of the amount of information the individual has available to form a judgment of relevant attributes (Peterson and Fitz 1988), search attribute claims followed by trial have the potential to generate more strongly held trial-based brand beliefs than trial alone. Thus, we posit:

**H1:** Search attribute claims will generate more favorable reactions than trial alone, resulting in more positive post-trial expectancy value (H1a), more positive post-trial product attitude (H1b), greater post-trial purchase intention (H1c), and greater purchase (H1d).

We also expect search attribute ads to result in more positive post-trial evaluations than experiential attribute ads because the experiential attribute claims do not add information that is otherwise inaccessible at trial. Thus, we posit:

**H2:** Search attribute claims will generate more favorable reactions than experiential attribute claims, resulting in more positive post-trial expectancy value (H2a), more positive post-trial brand attitude (H2b), greater post-trial purchase intention (H2c), and greater purchase (H2d).

In an advertising only context, using the EV model, several studies have demonstrated that objective claims, as opposed to subjective claims, generate more positive post-ad expected values, are more credible (Ford et al. 1990; Holbrook 1978), encounter less cognitive resistance (Edell and Staelin 1983), and generate higher purchase intentions (Darley and Smith 1993). In the context of advertising and trial, we expect claim objectivity to have an effect on post-trial evaluations if search attribute information, but not experiential attribute information, is shown in the pre-trial ad. With regard to the former, the relationship between advertising and higher-order beliefs (i.e., the dashed line in the IIRM model in Figure 1) is likely to be stronger for objective claims (which are more credible) than for subjective claims. With regard to the latter, consumers should form strong beliefs about experiential attributes during trial, thus having information consistent with that of trial (expressed in objective or subjective terms) from a less credible source, like advertising, cannot influence their post-trial evaluations. Thus, we expect:

**H3:** Objective search attribute claims will generate more favorable reactions than subjective search attribute claims, resulting in more positive post-trial expectancy value (H3a), more positive post-trial brand attitude (H3b), greater post-trial purchase intention (H3c), and greater purchase (H3d).

**MEASUREMENT AND METHOD**

**Stimulus Pretest and Attribute Identification**

**Product Choice.** Several pretests were conducted to identify the product and the attributes to be used in advertisements. Fifty-four undergraduate students rated ten products on diagnosticity by responding to two 7-point items: “Overall, if you were able to try the product, how confident would you be in your ability to judge the quality and performance of this product?” and “Overall, if you were able to try the product, how easy do you think would you be for you to judge the value of the product?” (Kempf and Smith 1998). Pens scored above the midpoint (M=4.90) on the diagnosticity scale (M=6.05, t(51)=16.75, p<.001), and were chosen for the experiment because of suitability to be tested in a group, laboratory setting.

**Attribute Identification and Evaluation.** Based on a review of pen advertisements and information solicitation of students’ opinions about the important attributes considered when buying a pen, we developed a list of attributes for each product that we included in the second pretest. Participants responded to “If you were going to buy a pen, how important would the following attributes be to you?” on a 7-point scale (1=“Not at all important,” 7=“Very important”) (Darley and Smith 1993). Attributes included feel of comfort of the pen, smooth feel of ink, functionality/easy operation, no leaking, durability, color of pen, color of ink, price, style/design, weight, and physical appearance. Six attributes were significantly above the midpoint (M=4.00) of the importance scale: style/design (M=4.69), price (M=5.77), ink color (M=5.08), pen comfort (M=5.52), smooth feel of ink (M=5.65), and no leaks (M=6.46). Two independent judges trained in the definition of search and experiential attributes identified color of ink, price, style/design as search attributes and comfort of the pen, smooth feel of ink, and no leaking as experiential attributes.

**Objective and Subjective Claim Identification.** Based on the findings from the product attribute pretest, we developed one objective and one subjective claim for each salient attribute. 54 undergraduate students were exposed to a description of claim objectivity/subjectivity (Ford et al. 1990) and asked to rate each claim on a 7-point scale (1=“Completely objective,” 7=“Completely subjective”). Participants perceived the objective search (OS) attribute claims (MOS=2.86) to be more objective than subjective search (SS) attribute claims (MSS=3.78, F(1, 50)=12.68, p=.001), and the objective experiential (OE) attribute claims...
(M_{OE}=3.51) to be more objective than subjective experiential (SE) attribute claims [M_{SE}=4.21, F(1, 50)=7.35, p<.01].

**Ad Stimuli and Experimental Procedures**

Four print advertisements, each containing three attribute claims, were developed. The ads were designed to resemble magazine advertisements in both content and layout. Except for the different attribute information, the four advertisements are identical in terms of color, graphic design, headline, and as similar as possible in terms of layout, and length of claims. The ads featured a graphic of the product and bullet points below the graphic listing attribute information. A headline designed to attract attention to the advertisement was also included.

Participants in each of the four Ad-Trial conditions and Trial-Only condition received a booklet upon entering the experimental session. Participants in the former conditions were exposed to one of the four advertisements: objective search attribute, subjective search attribute, objective experiential attribute, and subjective experiential attribute. The Trial-Only data were collected separately to Ad-trial data. The Ad-Trial and the Trial-Only booklets included a cover story and the questionnaire. The sample sizes for the conditions are: n_{OS}=27, n_{SS}=27, n_{OE}=25, n_{SE}=28, and n_{Tri}a=23.

Participants in the Ad-Trial conditions read the advertisement carefully, and then answered questions about the product and the ad. Next, participants examined the pen for up to five minutes (see Hoch and Ha 1986), after which they completed manipulation checks, dependent measures, and demographic information including age, marital status, family income, and race. Trial-Only participants tried the product for five minutes and completed the same post-trial measures, but not the post-ad, pre-trial measures, as the Ad-Trial participants.

**Measurement: Manipulation Checks**

*Product diagnosticity.* Product diagnosticity was measured after trial using the same two-item scale as in the pretest (r=63, p<.01). The pen’s diagnosticity score [M=6.09] was above the scale midpoint [M=4.00, t(129)=27.01, p<.001], indicative of a highly diagnostic product.

*Experiential/Search Attributes.* Participants were asked to indicate whether each attribute could be judged directly by product trial (7-point scale; 1=“I could not judge this attribute,” 7=“I could judge this attribute”). Participants mentioned that trial enabled them to judge the experiential (E) attributes (M_E=5.74) more than the search (S) attributes (M_S=3.40, t(112)=10.41, p<.001). Therefore, this manipulation was successful.

*Claim Objectivity.* Participants were first exposed to a description of claim objectivity/subjectivity (Ford et al. 1990) and then asked to rate the three claims on objectivity/subjectivity. The analysis indicates that objective claims were perceived as being more objective than subjective claims both for the search attribute condition [M_{OS}=2.93 vs. M_{SS}=3.52, t(56)=2.10, p<.05] and for the experiential attribute condition [M_{OE}=3.41 vs. M_{SE}=4.12, t(54)=2.05, p<.05].

**Measurement: Confound Checks**

We assessed two potential confounds including ad likeability and attribute importance. First, advertisements communicating different claims should not be different from each other. A 2 (claim type: objective vs. subjective) X 2 (attribute type: search vs. experiential) ANOVA with ad likeability as the dependent variable indicates no main effects of claim or attribute type and no significant interaction. Second, if search and experiential attributes differ in their importance, any comparison in their effectiveness will be confounded. A 2 X 2 MANOVA with search attribute importance and experiential attribute importance as dependent variables indicated a non-significant main effect and a non-significant interaction.

**Measurement: Dependent Variables**

*Post-Trial Expectancy Value (EV).* The complete expectancy value factor is constructed as the summation of the subject’s post-trial attribute-specific belief strength measured for each performance attribute (i.e., “How likely do you believe it is that the product has Attribute X?” measured on a 7-point scale of 1=“Zero likelihood” to 7=“Completely certain”) multiplied by the respective post-trial belief confidence (i.e., “How confident are you that the likelihood estimates you just provided in the question above for each of the product attributes is accurate?” measured on a 7-point scale of 1=“Not confident at all” to 7=“Extremely confident”) and by the respective post-trial evaluation of the each attribute (1=“Extremely bad,” 7=“Extremely good”) (Smith and Swinyard 1983).

*Post-Trial Product Attitude.* Although EV calculation is based on attributes in the advertisement, participants may evaluate the product on dimensions not mentioned in the advertisement (e.g., appropriateness of pictures, colors, or other elements). Thus, we included nine 7-point semantic-differential items to assess post-trial product attitude, including: bad/good, pleasant/unpleasant, disagreeable/agreeable, unsatisfactory/satisfactory, low appeal/high appeal, poor/excellent, one of the worst/one of the best, inferior/superior, poor value/good value, low quality/high quality (Marks and Kamins 1988). A product attitude score was calculated (Cronbach’s α=.95).

*Post-Trial Purchase Intention.* Purchase intention was measured using a two 7-point scale items (1=“Not at all likely,” 7=“Very likely”) (i.e., “How likely would you be to consider this product as a possible option if you were shopping for such a product?” and “How likely would you be to purchase this product if you were shopping for such a product?”). An unweighted average of the two items was used to assess participants’ purchase intention after they tested the advertised product (r=.88, p<.001).

*Post-Trial Product Choice.* Participants were given the choice of keeping either the product that they tested (i.e., pen) or another product (i.e., a battery-operated air freshener with fan or pen). At the time of choice, participants were given information about the “suggested price” of the products (i.e., same price, $5.95, for both products). The choice of the product tested was coded as “1” and the choice of the other product offered as “0.”

**RESULTS**

H1. H1 posits that a search attribute ad should generate more positive post-trial evaluations than a trial alone. A MANOVA with attribute type (i.e., search; experimental; no claim) as the independent variable indicates a significant main effect [Pillai’s Trace=.19, F(8, 258)=3.31, p<.01]. Further, MANOVA indicates a significant effect on expectancy value [F(2, 131)=5.06, p<.01], on purchase intention [F(2, 131)=3.28, p<.05], on product choice [F(2, 131)=5.03, p<.01], and a marginally significant effect on product attitude [F(2, 131)=2.27, p=.10]. We follow up with univariate ANOVAs and post-hoc contrasts to test specific hypotheses. H1a is not statistically supported, even though the means are in the expected direction (see Table 1). The findings support H1b, H1c, and H1d. Specifically, participants in the search attribute condition, compared to participants in the Trial-Only condition, shown more positive product attitudes (M=4.52 vs. M=3.87, p<.05), higher
The effect is significant for only two of the dependent variables, product choice ($M=152.73$ vs. $M=117.21$, $t(109)=2.9$, $p<.01$) and purchase intention ($M=3.28$ vs. $M=2.69$, $t(111)=1.29$, $p=.09$).

**H2.** H2 posited that search attribute information would generate more positive post-trial evaluations than experiential attribute information. Independent-sample $t$-tests that follow MANOVA provide support for H2a and partial support for H2c. Specifically, participants in the search attribute condition, compared to those in the experiential attribute condition, expressed higher expectancy values ($M=152.73$ vs. $M=117.21$, $t(109)=2.9$, $p<.01$) and higher purchase intentions ($M=3.28$ vs. $M=2.69$, $t(111)=1.29$, $p=.09$).

**H3.** A MANOVA with advertising claim (i.e., OS, SS, OE, SE, and Trial) as the independent variable indicates a significant advertising claim effect ($\text{Pillai's Trace}=.23$, $F(16, 480)=1.83$, $p<.05$). The effect is significant for only two of the dependent variables, purchase intention [$F(4, 120)=2.54$, $p<.05$] and product choice [$F(4, 120)=2.80$, $p<.05$]. Post-hoc contrasts on the previous analysis indicate no difference between post-trial evaluations given by participants in the objective search attribute condition and those given by the participants in the subjective search attribute condition. Thus H3 is not supported.

**DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

This study integrates and extends past findings in the advertising-trial area in numerous ways. First, we focus on a highly diagnostic product. Second, we examine the effect of trial alone and pre-trial advertising claims on post-trial evaluations, including product choice. Third, we distinguish between types of ad claims (subjective/objective claims about search/experiential attributes). Thus, we collectively consider relevant information about the product, advertisement, and trial experience.

Consistent with H1, we found that search attribute claims followed by trial generate more positive post-trial evaluations (i.e., product attitude, purchase intention, and product choice) than trial alone. Although the effect of attribute type on the expectancy value was not significant, the means were in the expected direction. The results contribute to the IIRM model that identifies the possibility of higher-order beliefs resulting from exposure to advertising, but does not fully predict under what conditions the higher-order beliefs will occur. Our results indicate that the pattern from advertising to higher-order beliefs is traversed when showing search attribute information in a pre-trial ad, which results in higher post-trial evaluation than trial alone.

Consistent with our expectations (H2), participants in the search attribute condition expressed higher post-trial expectancy values and marginally higher post-trial purchase intention than those in the experiential attribute condition. According to IIRM, advertising generates lower-order beliefs about the promoted attributes, thus having additional information from a less trusted source about attributes that consumers can test themselves during trial (i.e., experiential attributes) does not add value to the product experience. However, providing different (i.e., search attribute) information than that of trial increases consumers’ knowledge about the product, their confidence, and their post-trial product evaluations.

With regard to claim objectivity, H3 predicted that objective search attribute information (expected to be more credible) generates more positive post-trial evaluations than subjective search attribute information. The results, however, do not support this hypothesis. A follow-up analysis revealed that objective search attribute claims were perceived as being equally credible as subjective search attribute claims, which may account for these findings.

**DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Our work offers several opportunities for future research. First, we focused on pens, which would typically be characterized as a functional product. Future work designed to examine the effects of these advertising variables on hedonic products would be beneficial. We speculate that for hedonic products, for which experience itself is extremely important and beneficial. We speculate that for hedonic products, for which experience itself is extremely important and creates the opportunity for individual dream” (Hopkinson and Pujari 1999, p. 273), identification of experiential attributes in an advertising campaign preceding trial may facilitate imagination and guide the experience that is so important for judging a hedonic product adequately (Holbrook and Moore 1981).

Second, in contrast to past research (see Ford et al. 1990) which indicated that subjective claims were not perceived as less credible than objective claims, our findings indicated that objective and subjective claims were equally credible. This lack of difference may account for the lack of a significant difference between the objective and subjective search attribute conditions as related to the objectivity effect on post-trial evaluations. Thus, additional work is needed to further clarify the distinguishing dimensions of objective and subjective claims.
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Accentuate the Positive: Understanding Age Differences in Framing Effects
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ABSTRACT

The author explores the role of age differences in framing effects. Marketing studies have shown that negatively framed messages are more effective under conditions of high issue involvement. Public service campaign studies, on the other hand, claim that positively framed messages are more effective in encouraging healthy behaviors. Based on cognitive aging theory, it was hypothesized that prevention-oriented behaviors are facilitated by positively framed messages for senior citizens. A significant interaction between age and framing lends support to this argument. Given a high involvement and prevention-oriented behavior, positively framed messages were more effective for seniors compared to their younger counterparts who were influenced by negatively framed messages. The study further explored the motivational underpinnings of aging effects on persuasion. Implications for persuasion and public policy are discussed.

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Web Interface and Consumers’ Buying Intention in e-Tailing: Results from an Online Experiment
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ABSTRACT
This article empirically tests the influence of perceived atmospheric elements of an e-commerce website on consumers’ emotional and behavioral responses. Virtual atmosphere is considered as a multi dimensional construct integrating visual aesthetics, layout, and website social interactivity perception. The data was collected from a sample of Internet users who participated in an online survey. The main results show that all atmospheric factors have a positive impact on mood, which in turn strongly influence online purchase intentions. However, attitude toward the site was partially explained by atmospherics and did not impact purchase intentions.

INTRODUCTION
Online shopping over the Internet has witnessed unprecedented growth during the last decade. According to Internet World stats the global online population of Internet users worldwide increased 225% between 2000 and 2007, reaching over 1.1 billion (Internet World Stats 2007). Furthermore, sales at e-commerce sites in 2006 reached $102.1 billion, a 24 percent increase over 2005 sales (Burns, 2007), showing that consumers are getting more and more comfortable doing more transactions online and exhibit satisfaction with e-commerce surpassed that of offline retail by 11.6 percent, according to the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ClickZ network, 2007).

Even though for both marketing scholars and practitioners, the virtual marketplace represents an essential retailing channel (Hoffman et al., 1995; Chen and Wells, 1999; Yoo and Donthu, 2001), consumer usability issues are occasionally neglected by web designers, resulting in negative effects on consumer retention and loyalty. For example, a study by A. T. Kearney (2000) revealed that, due to poor web pages design, 82% of experienced online shoppers drop out their shopping process without completing the transaction. Researchers are then turning their attention toward understanding consumers’ reactions to e-shopping environments (Alba et al., 1997; Degeratu et al., 2000; Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Menon and Kahn, 2002). Whereas existing empirical research on web atmospherics is limited, most of the previous studies have focused on one aspect of interface stimuli (i.e. e-merchandising, colors, image sizes, structure...). The present research proposes to adopt Baker’s (1986) classification of store atmospheres (i.e. store sensory ambience, design layout and social factors) to the online shopping environment and will extend the web atmospheres literature by specifically addressing site design aesthetics, site layout navigability, and social interactivity. Based on S-O-R paradigm (Mehrabian and Russel, 1974; Donovan and Rossiter, 1982), a model is built and empirically tested. We expect that the web environmental factors will contribute to explain the online purchase intention of users through the effect of surfers’ mood states and their attitude toward the site. Results are then discussed, theoretical and practical implications will be presented.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND MODEL DEVELOPMENT
Considerable retailing literature addresses how physical store cues affect buyer behavior (see Baker, Parasuraman, Grewal, and Voss (2002) and Turley and Millman (2000) for reviews of this literature). Similarly, various researches in e-tailing have, in general, identified that web surfers’ experience is one of the most important factors that influence consumer’s attitude and behavior toward e-commerce sites. A positive experience with a Web site is desirable as it can potentially lead to more frequent site visits, more focused attention to the product promoted by the site, or even online purchase of the product (Childers et al, 2001).

The retail store environment has been described as a bundle of cues that affect and shape consumer behavior. In Kotler’s (1973) seminal work on physical mortar-and-brick store atmospherics, store atmospherics are defined as the “intentional control and structuring of environmental cues” or “design of space to create certain buyer effects”. He proposed that atmospheric cues may impact purchase decisions more than the product itself and may be more influential than other marketing inputs at the point of purchase (Baker et al., 1994). Following the research tradition in store atmospherics, Dailey (2004) defines Web atmospherics as the “conscious designing of Web environments to create positive affect and/or cognitions in surfers in order to develop positive consumer responses”. Regardless the support given by this definition to the capacity of the web environmental stimuli to affect shopping behaviors, no specific typology of the atmospheric cues is provided. Despite most cited Eroglu et al.’s (2001) high and low task relevant cues typology on Web atmospherics cues, no comprehensive classification of online store environment features has been proposed and empirically tested. In their exploratory study, Allagui and Msaad (2006) presented a conceptual framework including a taxonomy of web atmospheric cues. Following the recommendation of Eroglu et al (2001), they identify three major dimensions similar to what has been done within the traditional retail store environment by Baker (1986): sensory ambient features, layout design and social interactivity. Recently, researchers have undertaken a corpus of work on web atmospherics, consisting in studying the impact of a single atmospheric feature on shopping outcomes. In the present study, we propose a holistic, wider classification of web environmental stimuli (Lemoine, 2003) and suggest that they can be related to either the site’s aesthetic design (Khakimjanova and Park, 2005; Sutcliffe, Kurniawan and Shin, 2006), navigational structure (Dailey, 2004; Vrechopoulos et al, 2004; Griffith, 2005) or interactivity (Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Fortin and Dholakia, 2005).

Web visual Aesthetics:
The aesthetic dimension of web atmosphere basically concerns the site’s visual appeal (Lavie and Tractinsky, 2004) and relates to the use of colors, fonts, graphics, images, videos, animation, java applets. Steuer (1992)’s work seems to suggest that navigation design of a Web site alone could not bring out positive experience. It has been reported in many design guidelines how a site’s aesthetic elements, for example, color, symmetry, shape, space, depth of field, dynamic media, and match mood (see Sutcliffe, Kurniawan and Shin, 2006) can be manipulated to make a site attractive.

It has been reported that the images, text and colors used on a Web site can convey certain meanings to the viewer (Brett et al, 2005). Physiological tests have shown that warm colors, such as red and yellow, are arousing, whereas cooler colors, such as blue and...
green, are soothing. Drèze and Zufryden (1997) carried out research into the effects of color in web design and displays. However, aesthetic considerations may contradict some of the task-motivated guidelines because the design objective is to please the user and capture the attention rather than deliver information effectively. Design guidelines for aesthetics are difficult to formalize since judgment of aesthetic quality suffers from considerable individual differences.

Webpage Layout and Navigation Cues:
Among all the elements of a website, navigation design of a Web site is recognized as one of the important ones to determine the success of a Web site (Dailey, 2004). Navigation design is generally referred to as navigation cues or devices (e.g., a list of links) which allow users to move to a desired section and view pages of interest. When these navigation devices are salient and clear enough to help users’ cognitive processing of their movement in cyberspace, users are more likely to achieve optimal experience toward their surfing goals. On the other hand, if these devices are ambiguous and not user-friendly, the users are more likely to get lost in the cyberspace and as a consequence experience anxious through the Web navigation. Lohse and Spiller (1999) find that e-commerce layout characteristics have an impact on site traffic and sales while Burke (2002) states that these characteristics directly affect willingness to purchase online. Navigational layout in designing virtual stores becomes then a key element of maintaining customers on the website and helping them achieve their shopping tasks.

Social Interactivity:
Huang (2003) relates interactivity to the more “active” or “interactive” qualities of the online medium, and concerns the extent of information exchange between a web site and its user. He identified seven different types of interactivity (responsiveness, individualisation, navigability, reciprocity, synchronicity, participation and demonstrability) that could have an effect on consumer attitudes and behaviors in different ways. Social presence represents the degree to which a medium conveys the perceived presence of communicating participants in the two-way exchange, either between humans or between human and machine. This is also termed telepresence in Hoffman and Novak’s (1996) model of network navigation. Interactivity is likely to create feelings of social presence for the user through the availability of open channels allowing for two-way communication. It includes control, exchange of roles, and mutual discourse. Studies that have manipulated the level of interactivity suggest that interactivity has direct impact on involvement and arousal (Fortin and Dholakia, 2005). Reeves and Nass (1996) noted that static human images, photographs and speech can help to attract users and persuade them to buy goods by being polite and praising their choices. Likewise interactive animations of people, e.g. talking heads or full body avatars, have an attractive effect since the site ascribes human-like visual cues and increase the social warmth of the website (Hassanein and Head, 2006). Steuer (1992) made similar argument that virtual web site features can bring out more human experience, rather than technological interactions. Such online experience mimic real world experience, therefore is defined as virtual reality.

Effect on Mood States and Attitude toward the web site:
Stevenson et al. (2000) showed that attitude toward the site (ATS) is a useful construct in understanding the impact of a web site on shopping behaviors. Three factors account for determining attitude toward web sites: entertainment, informativeness, and organization (Chen and Wells, 1999; Chen et al., 2002). Considering web sites look like and reflect the characteristics of traditional retail settings, attitude toward the web site should therefore lead to consequences identical to those found in attitude research. Design rules of a commercial Web site emphasize important issues such as ease of navigation, interactivity and multimedia elements to develop its visual attractiveness and then consumers’ attitude toward the site. Mood is defined as “a type of affective state which is transient and particular to a specific time and situation” (Jeon, 1990, p.24 cited by Park et al, 2005). Gardner (1985) described mood as a phenomenological property of an affective state that an individual subjectively perceives. In relation to a pleasurable shopping experience created by store environment, studies have shown that a positive mood could be increased by exposure to a visual display (e.g., a moving object, prominent image size, distinct color) and result in greater intention to purchase (Spies et al, 1997). We expect then that well structured store layout and prominent store display using colorful signs and store lights as well as the existence of interactive elements on the website can positively stimulate consumers’ mood.

Purchase intention in Internet shopping:
Consumers normally form attitudes that influence purchase intention to buy products online when they use the Internet. Therefore, Internet usage and attitudes towards products online become strong predictors of the intention to purchase products online. Individual affective states (i.e. pleasure and arousal) were found to affect e-shoppers’ behaviors (Menon and Khan, 2002). Mood states are present in virtually every shopping encounter (Park et al, 2005); hence we expect that positive mood states affected by pleasant web environment will increase the surfers’ online shopping intention.

Research Model:
Based on the literature cited and following Mehrabian and Russell (1974) S-O-R framework, the research model was constructed (figure 1). Navigational website structure, visual aesthetics, and social presence directly impact attitude toward the site and mood states which in turn affects purchase intentions. The hypothesized interrelationships between the model constructs are depicted by the arrows, which show that the stimuli variables have a positive impact on attitude toward the site as well as mood states, which in turn positively affects purchase intention.

METHOD

Survey, sample selection and characteristics:
Data for the study was collected through an online survey. A website selling music CDs and movie DVDs was especially built for the purpose of this research and hosted online under the URL www.mediaestore.com. Two considerations have guided the selection of the product within this study: first, the product had to be readily available on the e-commerce market and second, appropriate to use by respondents. A database containing seven hundred fifty valid email addresses was used to recruit participants to the study. Subjects were asked to navigate on the website and to fill out an online questionnaire including the measurement instruments of the model constructs. Only interested Internet users took part of the study as no lottery was organized for individuals who responded to the questionnaire. Downes-Le Guin et al (2002) demonstrated that incentives yield a modest gain in response rates and in cost efficiency for Internet surveys. Yet, reliability of answers was assessed through the experiment duration: a software calculating the exact time of web navigation for every respondent was included to the site’s back
office (administrator’s interface). Respondents who spent less than ten minutes on the website were judged to be unable to provide valid answers to the survey questions.

A total of 171 valid questionnaires were considered for the data analysis. The sample consisted of 85 males and 86 females. Approximately 92% of the subjects were adults aged between 20 and 35 and averaged 4 hours of net surfing per week. About 60% of the respondents had purchased products over the Internet.

Site design:
Color choices, fonts, and global product images were inspired from three major real websites selling music and movies online. Navigational layout of the site was based on a tree hierarchical structure (Griffith, 2005) incorporating site map index and a search engine. A conversational virtual agent named cybelle was added to the interface and increased the “social warmth” of the site (Hassanein and Head, 2006). The programmed virtual agent could answer questions about product availability and interact with visitors by showing different facial expressions (smile, disappointment, shyness…).

Instruments:
Variable measurement scales were adapted from existing valid instruments. They are described in Table 1.

**RESULTS**

Factor analysis (Table 2):
An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to find out how the model constructs were linked to their underlying factors. The psychometric properties of the items composing the research scales were analyzed. Items with factor contribution under .4 were deleted. Each construct proved then to be unidimensional and factorially distinct and explained variance was valued at 90% for purchase Intentions and around 60% for the other model variables. Before conducting the test of the structural model, first-order confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to test the measurement model. The 6-factor structure obtained by the EFA was confirmed. Items contribution was satisfying (in average superior to .7) and only one item was deleted by CFA (i.e. item 6 of ATS scale). Construct reliability analysis was determined by Cronbach α and Joreskog Ω coefficients. All coefficients were found to be greater than the acceptable value of .6 which indicates high reliability.

**Full structural model:**
We used structural equations modeling (SEM) to test relationships between the model variables. SEM can help to improve theoretical testing and development in the model of Attitude toward the Internet retailer (Cheong and Leckenby, 2004). Overall, the results show support for the full structural model fit with a GFI, relative $\chi^2$ and CFI values of 0.94, 3.5 and 0.92, respectively. Path coefficients and t values representing the hypothesized relationships between the model variables are indicated below (Table 3).

Results show that web aesthetics perception affects the surfers’ mood states, as well as perceived website social interactivity. Layout had a weak but positive impact on mood and was significantly related to Attitude toward the site. However, neither web aesthetics perception nor social interactivity were found to be related to Attitude toward the site. Web environment stimuli had an indirect positive impact on online purchase intention through the effect of mood, as mood was found strongly related to purchase intention. However, the relationship between ATS and website purchase intention was not significant. Overall, five out of eight hypothesized links were validated in this study.

**DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**
Attracting and retaining customers on merchant websites with enhanced web design is a key element of successful e-tailers’ strategy. The present study provides empirical support that the use
web atmospheric cues has a positive impact on users’ affective and behavioral responses.

The compilation of atmospheric variables examined in this study have not been proposed by previous researchers in the context of Internet shopping, and sustain the contribution of visual ambient design, e-store layout and web social factors in explaining online shopping intentions through the mediated effect of individuals’ mood states.

**TABLE 1**
Measurement scales used in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent measures</th>
<th>Visual web aesthetics</th>
<th>Navigational structure</th>
<th>Social Interactivity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Four items were selected from web quality assessing scales Webqual and Sitequal (Barnes and Vidgen, 2001; Yoo and Donthu, 2001)</td>
<td>Four item scale adapted from Richard (2005)</td>
<td>Three items based on Hassanein and Head (2006) were used to measure social interactivity website</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variables</th>
<th>Mood states</th>
<th>Attitude toward the site</th>
<th>Purchase intentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mood scale developed by Pham (1996)</td>
<td>Six items ATS scale by Chen and Wells (1999)</td>
<td>Online purchase intentions scale by Yoo and Donthu (2001)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 2**
Results of exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale items</th>
<th>Factor loading (from exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis)</th>
<th>Extracted variance</th>
<th>Construct reliability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aesthetic</td>
<td>Layout</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetics: This site is visually attractive</td>
<td>.85 (.84)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The design of this site is creative</td>
<td></td>
<td>.84 (.84)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like background and color scheme on the pages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.78 (.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site displays good pictures of the products</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layout: The structure of this site is well organized</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are problems of navigation on this website*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pages organization allows great accessibility to product</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a helpful signage on this website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social interactivity: This website is interactive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This website enables two-way communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a warm social presence on this website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward the site: This website makes it easy for me to build a relationship with this company</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to visit this website again in the future</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m satisfied with the service provided by this website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel uncomfortable in surfing this website*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surfing this website is a good way to spend my time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compared to other sites I would rate this one among the best</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mood: Surfing on this website puts me in a good mood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While surfing on this site, I feel pleased</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surfing on this website makes me depressed*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase intentions: I will bye products from this site in the near future</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I intend to purchase through this site in the near future</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect to purchase through this site in the future</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Items anchored by 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree.*Reverse coded item
effective co-operation between different disciplines (HCI, marketing, retailing, etc.) will constitute the key for designing effective virtual shopping environments (Vrechopoulos et al, 2004) by incorporating some web atmospheric cues.

The limitations related to our study would draw some future research directions. The first is related to the survey nature of the research. Studies that experimentally manipulate virtual store environments would clearly capture more effect of web atmosphere on consumer emotions and behaviors. Websites with different level of aesthetic perception, layout, and social interactivity can be used to evaluate the shopping outcomes of Internet users. Besides, it would be interesting to know if the three atmospheric categories of variables interact and have a common impact on consumers, as well as incorporating individual and situational variables (involvement, atmospheric responsiveness, shopper motivation) that could moderate the model relationships (Sautter et al, 2004).

Future research could also focus on other product types or services to increase external validity of the research model. Such research may reveal that e-store environmental stimuli affect consumer buying behavior differently through product nature.

**TABLE 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Path</th>
<th>Loadings (t values)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Web aesthetics</td>
<td>Attitude Toward the Site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web aesthetics</td>
<td>Mood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural layout</td>
<td>Attitude Toward the Site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural layout</td>
<td>Mood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Interactivity</td>
<td>Attitude Toward the Site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Interactivity</td>
<td>Mood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude Toward the Site</td>
<td>Website Purchase Intention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mood</td>
<td>Website Purchase Intention</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fit Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$ / d.f.</td>
<td>682.96 (P=0.0) / 198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GFI</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFI</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMSEA</td>
<td>0.082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFI</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NNFI</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The theoretical implications of this research take several forms. It demonstrates the validity of the S-O-R framework in predicting Internet surfers’ shopping outcomes and confirms relationships found in previous research (Eroglu et al, 2001; Park et al, 2005), since affective responses to virtual store environment were strongly related to purchase intention from the e-store. However, while roughly validating the stimulus-organism-response paradigm in the online shopping context, the results are mixed regarding the mediating role of attitude towards the site. In line with Richard and Chandra (2005), the attitude toward the site construct did not impact that intention and was explained only by the layout characteristics of the website. This reveals that customers’ shopping behavior is facilitated by being able to reach any place in the store directly (e.g. Hierarchical Tree structure), either from the home page or from any other place in the e-store, which positively impact affective states and attitude toward the web site.

The use of visual artistic schemes and presence of an embodied conversational agent on the website were only positively related to mood states felt while navigating on the website. Following Menon and Kahn (2002), we find that these atmospheric variables contribute to a pleasant e-shopping experience traducing global positive feelings.

Strategic exploitation of the present study’s findings by virtual retailers should contribute to the development of more effective and consumer-friendly shopping site interfaces. Web designers should focus on entertaining aspects of e-shopping in order to generate positive mood states, which will increase their purchase intention. The use of interactive elements such as a conversational agent would not only help the customers in finding products on the website, but also make it more appealing and “socially warm”. This result was also found by Wang et al (2007) underlying the relationship between the presence of an avatar on the interface of a merchant website and affective reactions of its users. Thus, those elements can be an added value to the e-tailer for both functional and recreational aspects as while shopping on the Internet, customers would undertake similar activities that they do in the real shopping environment.

Considering the IS literature on web usability, we posit that effective co-operation between different disciplines (HCI, marketing, retailing, etc.) will constitute the key for designing effective virtual shopping environments (Vrechopoulos et al, 2004) by incorporating some web atmospheric cues.

**REFERENCES**


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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Conceptualization:
In his pioneering article, Cova (1997) examines how people form bonds through consuming products and experiences in a postmodern society. He suggests individuals form ‘tribes’ through these consumption processes. Each tribe contains unique social and interpersonal dynamics, which are often related to the shared product or brand thus forming what Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) name a “brand community”. These definitions present challenges as a result of the co-existence of sub-tribes within a given brand community that allocate different meanings to a particular brand. This plurality of meanings seems exacerbated for global brands where meanings are shaped by tremendously varying cultures. This paper explores tribe and brand community concepts within a gaming context by examining meanings inherent to consumption processes for U.S. and French participants of a battle reenactment game titled Warhammer. It argues that community attached to a global brand constitutes a complex phenomenon, one that both integrates and ignores geographical considerations.

Methodology:
In order to gain a greater understanding of cross-border consumption processes for Warhammer enthusiasts, we conducted a total of 24 in-depth interviews in Marseilles, France and Madison, Wisconsin (USA), as well as collected data via naturalistic inquiry during a three-week period.

Major Findings 1-Comparative Acculturation:
Several consumption themes evolved from the interviews and observations in the U.S. and France. In terms of ‘socialization’ as a theme, both American and French Warhammer gamers socialize a lot among themselves when they play, however, they are less likely to hang out together outside of the gaming environment. The American gamers feel a sense of being looked upon as outcasts by the outside world due to their interest in Warhammer. On the other hand, French players seem to face a certain sense of opposition from mainstream society for their indulgence in an imaginary game with figurines now that they are young adults.

American Warhammer enthusiasts also hold a strong attraction to violent imagery when they describe the various aspects of the game. They are also interested in reading violent books and watching violent TV shows and movies. For French informants, violence seemed less relevant. What interests the French more is the opportunity to escape from mainstream society for their indulgence in an imaginary game with figurines now that they are young adults.

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In addition, gamers’ sense of accomplishment from personally creating figurines, can be considered a form of the extension of the self (Waskul and Lust, 2004). As American informants became more experienced, their focus moved towards winning the game rather than on other aspects such as painting. Thus, with experience, informants become more competitive, which can overshadow their need for socializing and the easy-going environment. French counterparts, on the other hand, were concerned less about winning and more about the other facets of the game. American gamers were often competitive to satisfy their urge to win the battle, while the French felt less of a sense to win and more of a desire to experience the game itself.

Finally for American informants, consuming Warhammer enabled them to imagine and create various war scenarios, and different historical periods to thus ‘transfer’ them back in time. In addition, the figurines created a conduit for the players to enter into a different reality through their fictitious names and physical forms. The French similarly enjoyed the opportunity to escape into another universe, but the emphasis was more on creativity through escapism and the interesting experience. Warhammer enthusiasts’ interests paralleled the interests of other fantasy role playing gamers in this respect (Fine, 1983; Douse and McManus, 1993).

Major Findings II-Contributions to Theory:
Our findings also highlight the elements of homogeneity and heterogeneity that reside in the cross-border meanings of the brand. Our study of Warhammer enthusiasts suggests individuals form bonds with each other based on consumption processes inherent to the game. They resemble a tribe described by Cova (1997), which exemplifies the synthesizing of poststructural and postmodern approaches. The meaning of Warhammer is suspended between the postmodern imaginary level (Cova and Cova, 2002) created by the Warhammer constellation of communities and the rooted structural meanings drawn from the local cultures. The tribal dimension lies in between, which influences the meanings attached to the game. The tribe is the postmodern engine, which connects imaginary meanings and cultural meanings, thus giving the subject the poststructural freedom to refer to his or her cultural heritage without being bound by it.

References


ABSTRACT

Cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984) is proposed as a model for an exploration of the consumer behaviour of football fans. A study of two fan communities shows the presence of a system of cultural capital used to maintain social distinctions between 'real' fans and 'daytrippers'. The system of cultural capital is also used to grant group membership to those deemed worthy of it. Cultural capital is used not merely to practice social distinction but as a means of sacralisation maintenance, in this case to ensure that the sacred identity of the group is perpetuated through the recruitment of new members. Finally, while the inner circle of traditional fans view the market as a de-sacralising influence, the wider fan community consume official branded football merchandise in order to experience the sacred.

INTRODUCTION

Cultural capital is defined as a knowledge of how to consume, how to appreciate, to understand what should be considered tasteful and what should not (Bourdieu 1984, Holt 1998). This specialist knowledge, this vocabulary, this way of consuming, allows members of the elite in society to fully appreciate, understand and categorize cultural objects in a manner that others cannot. Hence it can be used to control access to membership of the elite. This knowledge is organised in perceptual schemes (known as programmes for perception), learned primarily through socialisation processes within the dominant social class. Members of the elite can then correctly observe the nuances and values of their collective habitus. Other social classes, having a different habitus, have different tastes which are expressed through practices considered lower in cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984:28). This paper proposes that cultural capital can be reconceptualised to illustrate how consumption is structured not only within traditional social collectives, but also postmodern configurations such as subcultures of consumption (Thornton 1997).

This study examines the operation of systems of cultural capital among fans of association football. A number of factors justify this choice. Observation of football fan web forums and other media indicates the presence of deliberate practices of distinction. Perusal of the academic literature on football fandom similarly reveals competing definitions of fan authenticity, and research has found evidence of deliberate alteration of consumption practices by some football supporters for the maintenance of distinction from other categories of fan (King, 1997, 1998). Finally, while the literature differs in its characterisation of football fandom, some researchers utilising the concept of neotribalism (Cova 1997), others that of subculture (Giulianotti 1999), this study demonstrates that the concept of cultural capital is central to understanding the behaviour of consumers within this field, irrespective of its overall conceptual characterisation as either subculture of consumption or neotribal collective.

CRITICISMS OF CULTURAL CAPITAL

Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital has not been without its critics. Critics of Bourdieu have tended to take the view that members of the dominant social class in North America, for example, tend not to limit their expressed tastes to 'legitimate' (as opposed to popular) culture, and that an ability to aesthetically appreciate the arts is not a key to social or economic advancement (Erickson 1996, Gartman 1991, Halle 1993). While Gartman (1991) accepts that the “evidence for class differences is systematically stronger in fields of nonmaterial [this writer’s italics] culture… (visual arts, music, literature) than in fields of material culture (food, clothing, furniture)” he argues that there is substantial evidence to support the notion of a commonly consumed mass culture that transcends class boundaries (1991:430), even in the sphere of non-material culture. This finding is to some degree corroborated by Erickson, who suggests that for the most part knowledge of popular culture in general, and often sport in particular, can be of greater use in securing social and career success, even among business executives.

It is interesting, however, that while Halle (1993), for example, claims to find evidence of similarity of taste across social class boundaries, one is struck when examining his photographic data by the clearly apparent differences in taste across social class, evident in the clear differences in interior décor between the working class homes of Greenpoint and the upper class homes of Manhattan. Certainly there are superficial similarities in the taste for art across social classes, such as a common taste for landscapes, but by limiting his examination to only one field of consumption, Halle (ibid) fails to notice the rather obvious differences in taste that present themselves in terms of overall tastes in interior design. In contrast to the above criticisms, Holt (1998) found that by examining multiple fields of consumption, not only was the influence of habitus apparent, but that systems of cultural capital were used by members of the dominant class to maintain their (perceived) superior social status, their distinctiveness from the masses, albeit not necessarily with conscious intent. Once so many members of the working class achieve economic parity with their ‘betters’, and once powerful material reminders of social status such as large houses, cars, or yachts lose some of their symbolic value to confer distinction, the elite seek to retain status through subtle shifts in the manner of exercise of their tastes. How one consumes, rather than what one consumes, is the true basis for distinction. Holt argues that this is what Bourdieu sought to explain to us all along.

The question at hand, however, is not whether members of different socio-economic classes are influenced by habitus or cultural capital, but whether members of other types of social configuration besides social class proactively utilise knowledge systems of not only what to consume, but more importantly how to consume it, to limit or control access to membership of their group. This paper argues that Bourdieu’s theory can be applied to explain behaviour, or the search for higher social status within certain social configurations, such as the community of fans attached to a particular football club. It will also demonstrate that the concept of cultural capital can help to explain the differences in consumption patterns across different categories of football fan.

FANDOM, AUTHENTICITY, AND THE NEW CONSUMPTION OF FOOTBALL

Research on fandom has tended to draw from either one of two disciplines i.e. psychological or sociological perspectives. Psychological variables such as Basking in Reflected Glory (BIRGing), Cutting Off Reflected Failure, and level of Team Identification (Madrigal 1995, 2000; Matsuoka et al 2003) have certainly enhanced our understanding of certain aspects of sports fan behaviour, but have not addressed the role played by group dynamics.
Madrigal (2000), however, has proposed the notion of fan camaraderie as consumable object. “(U)ltimate loyalty” towards this object arises when the group becomes part of the individual’s sense of extended self (Belk 1988). It is now proposed that just as relationships among devotees of Saab or Apple Macintosh facilitate individual brand loyalty (Muniz & O’Guinn 2001) the social or group dimension of fandom plays a pivotal role not only in maintaining loyalty towards the team, but in shaping the entire consumption experience. Indeed, recent research has confirmed the significance of the role of the fan community in shaping the nature of fandom (Holt 1995; Derbaix et al 2002).

It is significant that in much of the sociological literature on fans of association football, issues that relate directly to the concepts of habitus and cultural capital are to the fore. Just as those at the core of the Harley Davidson Subculture reject the notion that their imitators could possibly be authentic bikers (Schouten & McAlexander 1995), the Manchester United hard core ‘lads’ (King, 1997, 1998) question the authenticity of other categories of football fan whose practices differ from theirs. The “new consumer” fans are recognizable, according to the ‘lads’, by their wearing of official replica shirts and their passive behaviour at football matches. The stereotype of this ‘new’ fan, as asserted not only by King’s ‘lads’ (1998:155) but sociologists such as Giulianotti (1999), includes a failure to join in the pre-match drinking, and a lack of participation in the ritual singing and chanting of football songs and slogans during the match. This suggests that football fandom, and the consumption patterns of football fans, might best be understood by means of an analysis of the presence and parameters of a fan-specific system (or systems) of cultural capital, that are utilised to maintain distinctions between different categories of fan. Such a system of cultural capital would be comparable conceptually to Thornton’s (1997) theory of subcultural capital.

**METHODOLOGY**

The study of a cultural field of which the researcher is already a member is considered unproblematic, provided appropriate techniques are adopted to ‘make the familiar strange’ and maintain an appropriate level of analytic distance (Lofland & Lofland 1995; Schouten & McAlexander 1995). In addition, the participant researcher will already possess an ‘insider’ understanding of that culture, which facilitates assessment of data (Lofland & Lofland 1995). For the purposes of this study it was thus deemed appropriate to define the field in terms of the respective fan communities of two particular clubs, Liverpool F.C. and Cork City F.C. A period of prolonged immersion (Stewart 1998) in the fan cultures of both clubs has therefore been carried out. This involved systematic participant observation during football matches in the home stadia of both teams over a twenty four month time period, and participant observation on several web based fan discussion forums over a somewhat longer timeframe. Web discussion forums were chosen for participation on the basis of appropriate criteria for ‘netnography’ (Kozinets 2002). A number of qualitative interviews were also carried out with fans of both teams. Study respondents were initially selected using Lofland & Lofland’s ‘casting about’ approach but purposive sampling (Stewart 1998) was subsequently used to identify and interview respondents who matched criteria identified during the early phase of the study. Data was analysed in the iterative manner recommended by Spiggle (1994) and Lofland & Lofland (1995).

**THE HABITUS OF THE FOOTBALL FAN**

A number of interesting and related themes have emerged from the research. Football fan culture does indeed possess a structure that can be conceptualised in terms of Bourdieu’s theory of habitus. In the first instance, football fans are loyal to an incredible degree. Being a supporter means consistently displaying an enduring and unconditional loyalty to one team irrespective of their circumstances. Team-switching is taken as an indication that the person who has switched sides is not a real fan. The practice of team-switching is equated with being a ‘glory hunter’. The term ‘glory hunter’ is used deliberately as a derogatory and insulting label to imply that the team switcher is “quite shallow”, and is easily seduced by a different team’s success:

> A real fan is someone who has the club in their blood basically, who follows the club through thick and thin...a glory hunter doesn’t have that...they’d move on to a different club in the morning if a different club became successful...I would be a real Liverpool fan in the sense that I’ll never switch to another club even though there’s a lot more successful clubs around (Joe Brown, Irish Liverpool supporter)

The emphasis placed by some fans on derogation (e.g. the emic label ‘glory hunter’) of the practice of team-switching is consistent with social identity theory, which explains it in terms of utilization of the (derogated) ‘out’ group to help define the identity of the ingroup (Aharpour 1999:11). From the conceptual perspective of habitus and cultural capital, however, what is of interest is the presence of a clear hierarchy of authenticity within fan culture i.e. the assertion that some people are ‘real’ supporters, and others are not. Bourdieu (1984:211) argues that any conflict “over the legitimate way of doing it” will result in changes in consumption practice to preserve the necessary inter-group distinctions (Bourdieu 1984:211, Holt 1998). ‘Real’ fans achieve this distinction in the first instance by their complete dismissal of the authenticity of anyone who would switch teams:

> ...it’s just a bit of fun for them so they’re not really supporters. (John Downey, Irish Liverpool fan)

Far from being restricted to the above means of achieving distinction, however, football supporters have an entire field of practices from which to draw, in order to assert what is meant by a ‘real fan’:

> ...(T)he fella who’s been through it, the fella who goes along with hope and expectation every game, who doesn’t moan, bitch and complain at the end of every game—win lose or draw, the type of fella who shouts a bit of encouragement out there, who’s entitled to his opinions, who calls a fella a dozy b– for missing something but doesn’t mean it, who’ll give him encouragement the next minute...that’s not just a real City fan, that’s what a real football fan is (David Allen, Cork City supporter)

This helps to flesh out, in emic terms, what is meant by the term a ‘real fan’. He has “been through it”, he “doesn’t moan, bitch, and complain”, and so on. He is there to encourage the team for every game, to actively offer his support, in contrast to “that guy (who) might come to the big game, two games a season”.

**FANDOM, STYLES OF CONSUMPTION, AND VOLUNTARY FRUGALITY**

A clear pattern in studying so called hardcore fans is that their definition of ‘real’ fandom typically does not make reference to consumer goods. It is interesting therefore to consider the choices of goods and services that they do make. ‘Real’ fans are those who practice voluntary frugality in relation to consumption of goods and
services. Fans will sometimes go to extraordinary lengths to follow their team, home or away, using the most frugal means of transport available:

(The travel was ridiculous, cos we flew out of Dublin at 6 o’clock in the morning so we travelled up overnight, stayed in Dublin airport, we flew into Charleroi, and it was a nine-hour drive down to Nantes, five of us in the car, the sun was beating down on top of us…(so) we were in a pretty state when we arrived…it was hell, that’s what we described it as when we got to Nantes, it was hell! (Pablo’, Cork City fan).

This taste for frugality arises directly out of the obligations suggested by the *habitus* of the hard core fan. Having to travel to every away match to support the team dictates that money will be in short supply and must be made to stretch as far as possible. Cheap flights, budget hotels (if not sleeping rough in the airport for a few hours) and downmarket restaurants are chosen with this in mind. The obligation to follow the team everywhere therefore results in the development of a taste for the necessary i.e. a higher cultural preference or value is attached to those things which allow the fan to fulfil this obligation (Bourdieu, 1984:177, Holt 1998:7). For these fans, to travel in style and stay in upmarket accommodation would therefore amount to a breach of the ‘call to order’ (Bourdieu 1984:380). Their frugality is socially rewarded in terms of the cultural capital gained from going on these ‘European away trips’. Supporters can join in the storytelling and mutual recounting of these experiences, the effect of which is to reaffirm the group in their distinctive identity as ‘real fans’.

ADDITIONAL PRACTICES OF THE HABITUS:
THE (SACRED) MEANINGS OF SINGING

Feelings of duty or obligation to the team extend for some fans not only to attending matches but being as vocal as possible in their support. This not only reflects the requirement for unconditional devotion to the team, but also reflects the obligation in the *habitus* of the hard-core fans to act as co-producers with the team. The onus is not only on the players to try to win the match, but for the fans to perform their role of providing active support:

(F)rom goal keeper to striker, you know that they’re all giving it their all now and they’re professional and they’re not in the pub the night before, basically and you appreciate that…it’s professional on the field (so) …the supporters are trying to be a bit more…professional (‘Pablo’, Cork City)

Participation in ritualised singing and chanting has a number of additional effects. It bonds the fans together as a group, deepening the felt sense of group identity (Belk 1988, McCracken 1988:87). It provides opportunities for narcissistic display (Maffesoli 1996) while satisfying the taste for communal festivity and immediate gratification at times when the match itself is not entertaining (Bourdieu 1984:34). It also deepens the felt sense of participation in the tribal hunt (Morris 2002:467-469). Morris conceptualises sports activity in terms of a pseudo-hunt which allows both participant and spectator to exercise the instinctive need to hunt, born of primeval man but still subconsciously present in the contemporary consumer. Football in particular provides all the necessary excitement of the hunt, with its drama, physical exertions, and the need to aim (the football) at the prey (the goalmouth). The supporters, with their rhythmical drumming, singing, and chanting, actively participate in encouraging the lead hunters (the players) and intimidating or attempting to intimidate the hunters (both team and supporters) from the rival tribe, who, in providing the opposition, play a central role in the drama.

The atmosphere at a football match is therefore most highly charged when the home fans’ main rivals are in town, because this chief group of ‘others’ allows the ‘home’ fans to experience a particularly intense celebration of their own identity (Aharpour 1999:11 & 228). The ‘away’ fans are thus an important catalyst in enabling the home fans to maintain the sacredness (Belk et al 1989) of their tribal identity with an intensity that is usually only experienced on a handful of occasions. The presence of major rivals is usually required, so there is a noticeable qualitative difference in the atmosphere when Liverpool play against Manchester United rather than against Fulham, for example, or when Cork City play against Shamrock Rovers rather than Derry. The die-hard fans see it as their duty to contribute to this atmosphere, in order to secure a successful outcome to the hunt:

You couldn’t be quiet (on the Kop). There was peer pressure to join in—especially the important chants

Give me an example of an ‘important’ chant

Say when you’re one-nil down

Yeah?

‘Attack! Attack! Attack Attack Attack!’…That had to be sustained, it had to be frightening. And if you weren’t chanting you’d get a bit of a ‘Come on!’… nights like St. Etienne you weren’t allowed to shut up! If you weren’t singing you’d get thrown out of the way

(‘Jeff Mac’, Liverpool fan)

Fans are somewhat divided on the question of whether such acts of co-production constitutes a full part of the ‘call to order’. Some fans are tolerant of supporters who do not contribute, others are not. There is no question however but that many fans use this as a differentiating factor to distinguish themselves from less ‘authentic’ fans. It therefore represents yet another part of the systematic practice of distinction. What is of interest from the perspective of consumer theory however is that yet again the system of cultural capital confers high status on what is essentially a non市场化 activity. No official market good or service can be purchased to obtain cultural capital here. The market is essentially absent from the processes of earning or exercising cultural capital.

QUALITATIVE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FAN CATEGORIES: THE ROLE OF CONSUMER GOODS

The above discussion leads us to the question of whether all fans take the same view of the products and services proffered by football marketers. What our research indicates is that broadly speaking there are two conflicting views of these products and services among Liverpool fans, depending on whether they are members of the inner subculture (usually, but not necessarily, from Liverpool itself) or the wider (i.e. from elsewhere in the U.K. or from other countries) neo-tribal (Cova 1997) community. Among this wider community of Liverpool fans, many seem to be unaware of the more subtle aspects of the system of cultural capital that operates among the hard-core fans. The neo tribal fan’s imitation of the subcultural habitus means that neo-tribal consumption of football retains many characteristics of the original, however. The tenacious loyalty of the fan to his or her team is a common characteristic, for example. However the neo tribal fan has a stronger dependence on official merchandise and other commercialised products that facilitate development and maintenance of the identity of self as dedicated football supporter (Belk 1988;
Elliott & Wattanasuwan 1998). They speak in terms of having to visit the club shop when they are in Liverpool, having to buy merchandise, having to buy programmes.

While the practices of this wider group may be grounded in acts of explicitly commercial consumption, their sense of felt devotion is genuine. The singing of ‘You’ll Never Walk Alone’ (sung at home games before the match begins) is a sacred experience for not only the local but also the non-local Liverpool fan. That such feelings of devotion and sacredness transcend national boundaries is evident in the explanation of Henrik Soderlund, a Liverpool fan from Sweden, that “…it (participating in this ritual singing) makes my skin (turn into goosebumps)”. Other non local Liverpool supporters express similar sentiments, while continuing to emphasise the role of the merchandise:

Ever since then (Liverpool versus Celtic, UEFA Cup tie, 2003) I’ve wanted one of those (Liverpool/ Celtic football scarves)…that atmosphere. That would have been a match.

Everyone singing ‘You’ll Never Walk Alone’ (‘Alan’, Irish Liverpool fan)

While the non-local fans can participate to a great degree in most of the required behaviours of the subcultural habitus, some aspects of it can be problematic.

They cannot always join in the singing, for example, because they do not know the words. They join in the simpler chants instead, and sometimes sing them at inappropriate times, to the chagrin and annoyance of local fans. Their over-reliance on merchandise can and sometimes sing them at inappropriate times, to the chagrin and annoyance of local fans. They join in the simpler chants instead, having to buy programmes.

Elliott & Wattanasuwan 1998). They speak in terms of...

As long as someone is a fan and loves the club for its footy and not cos it’s popular to go to a big club’s games then it matters not where they are from (‘Upon My Chest’)

Like someone said above attitude not accent, know the songs know our history and know the city and you’ll be fine (‘Big Al’, Liverpool supporter on RAOTL)

Ultimately, members recognise that the community has to accept new members from outside or the community’s sacred status is threatened. Accepting new members is therefore another practice designed to maintain sacredness. Newcomers are scrutinised however, to make sure they demonstrate the correct characteristics, and thus do not pose a threat to group identity (Aharpour 1999:32). Hence the disavowal of merchandise-consuming ‘daytrippers’ for example. Those fans who correctly display adherence to the required habitus and system of cultural capital, by prioritising the non市场化 practices of singing the right songs and knowing the club’s history, over the ‘day tripper’ practice of buying large quantities of merchandise, are welcomed with open arms:

…If you’re a Red, you’re good enough for me (‘True Red’ on the RAOTL forum).

DISCUSSION

Revisiting Bourdieu’s concepts of cultural capital and habitus has proved very useful in exploring and explaining the consumer behaviour of football fans. A number of studies of collective consumption, such as Muniz and O’Guinn’s (2001) landmark study of brand community have stressed the value of examining localised systems of cultural capital, but by giving consideration to the wider concept of habitus and how it is operationalised in terms of a subculture’s internal ‘call to order’, we can shed further light on the subculture-specific criteria upon which localised systems of cultural capital are based. Cultural capital tells us that voluntary frugality is important, for example, but habitus tells us why it is important. Also, while the fan community welcomes new members, it rejects those who do not demonstrate an appreciation of the right ways to support the club. Fans who fail to comply with the call to order of the habitus are deemed to lack an appreciation of the system of cultural capital, and are therefore excluded from the recognition bestowed through consciousness of kind (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001).

Furthermore, the repeated rituals of fan sacrifice required by the preference for frugality within the habitus, concretise and sacralise the sense of ownership that fans have in relation to their team. Sacrifice sacralises not only the consumption object but also the relationship between object and self (Pimentel & Reynolds 2004). Our understanding of the relationship between ritual and self (McCracken 1988) should be extended to reflect that where personal sacrifice is involved the concretising effect of ritual on self is considerably enhanced. The sacrifices made by ‘real’ fans therefore result in stronger feelings of ownership, and the frequent belief that they are the only ones who truly ‘understand’ (O’Guinn 1991).

The resulting strong sense of ownership of the team among football supporters can occasionally be voiced in terms of opposition to the ‘suits’ (King 1997) which echoes the themes of resistance and anti-corporatism found in the wider fan literature, when corporations act in ways which diverge from fan community values (Kozinets 2001). This also has resonances in other communities of consumption, such as the Saab owners (Muniz & O’Guinn 2001) or the Harley Davidson bikers (Schouten & McAlexander 1995) who claim that they, and not the corporation, are the ones who understand what the brand truly represents.

This issue of ownership points to the power of cultural capital as a mechanism for supporting community identities which need not be aligned to, and can sometimes be aligned in direct opposition to, the corporation that actually manages the ‘brand’. For example,
while the executives running Liverpool F.C. invariably describe the club’s identity as a brand, this definition is contested by many of the fans. Football Marketers (and indeed marketers of any brand that is associated with a community of consumption) would therefore be well advised to pay careful attention to the prevailing system of cultural capital within the core community, because it provides an excellent guide to consumer perceptions of the ‘true meaning’ of the ‘brand’. An understanding of this system would allow marketing practitioners to manage their ‘brands’ without alienating those hard-core devotees whose community structures can have significant effects on the acceptance or rejection of new products (Muniz & O’Guinn 2001; Schouten & McAlexander 1995). In the particular case of hardcore football fans, whose practices as passionate fans help to construct the consumption object (Holt 1995) of match atmosphere that renders the ‘product’ so attractive to the wider fan community, such an understanding might be of even greater strategic value. Ultimately however, the system of cultural capital is not simply a way to control access to the community of fans, or merely a means of guiding fan consumption. It is an important part of the community’s arsenal in guarding the sacred identity of the tribe and the (footballing) values the tribe represent. Finally, among the questions of importance for further research are those of firstly whether new members of the subculture are immediately granted full membership of the group, or whether they first have to serve a probationary period, and secondly, how might we explain those deviations from the profane to the sacred consumption (regular attenders): Merchandise viewed as means of accessing sacred consumption.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Although product placement in video games is expected to generate 800 million dollars every year (Case, 2005), and its unique advantage over brand placements in TV and film has been well documented (e.g. Nelson, 2002), little is known about its effectiveness or how to define and measure such effectiveness, especially with regard to children (Auty and Lewis, 2004). In order to fill in the above research gap, two experiments were done to explore the effectiveness of brand placements in video games on children’s choice and to see if any effect is moderated by mood.

Processing fluency (the ease with which a stimulus comes to mind) has been found to reliably bias consumer judgment and lead to positive evaluation (see Schwarz, 2004; Winkelman et al, 2003 for a review). Product placement in video games may lead to processing fluency as players often allocate limited attention to background details and the stimulus may be processed perceptually without any concomitant cognitive processing (Auty and Lewis, 2004). Without realizing the true source of fluency, game players may misattribute their subjective ease of processing the brand as preference for the brands shown in the game. Such effects are strongest when consumers lack cognitive capacity, such as the young children in this research, or lack the motivation to process the stimulus in sufficient detail to make a judgment (Winkelman et al, 2003).

Alongside work on fluency, psychologists have provided an extensive and growing body of literature about the effect of emotion and mood on information processing and judgment (see Clore, Schwarz and Conway, 1994; Forgas, 1995 for a review). Will a negative mood offset the hedonic marking of processing fluency by encouraging a more systematic processing of stimulus details and lead to a negative judgment?

Based on these theoretical accounts, the following hypotheses are made:

\[ H1: \] Children exposed to product placement in a video game will be more likely to choose the placed brand when offered a choice of drink from a display than those who have not played the “branded” game.

\[ H2a: \] When exposed to the same “branded” game, children in the positive mood condition will be more likely to choose the placed brand than children in other conditions.

\[ H2b: \] When exposed to the same “branded” game, children in the positive mood condition will be less likely to recall the placed brands than children in other conditions.

\[ H3a: \] When exposed to the same “branded” game, children in the negative mood condition will be less likely to choose the placed brand than children in other conditions.

\[ H3b: \] When exposed to the same “branded” game, children in the negative mood condition are more likely to recall the placed brands in the game than children in other conditions.

To test these hypotheses, 165 Chinese children from Shanghai were recruited for two experiments to test product placement effectiveness in video games on children’s choice. Study 1 (n=71) replicated Auty and Lewis’s (2004) research on young children in a video game context. One group of children played a “branded” game and a control group played a game without brands. The children were offered a choice of the brand and the market leader in the same category. We found that product placement had a clear effect on children’s choice even though all but one played the games for the first time and for only a few minutes. In Study 2 (n=94), by manipulating children’s mood while playing a “branded” video game (positive/neutral/negative mood), we found that children in the positive mood were significantly more likely than children in other conditions to choose brands in the game in a written task asking which brand from the category a store manager should display. This difference in choice, however, could not be explained by more explicit attention to detail because, even though there was almost a significant difference (p=.06) in recall between children in the happy condition versus children in other conditions, there was very little explicit recall overall (only 6 in the negative condition out of 94 in all conditions recalled one or the other of the target brands).

Children in the negative mood condition were significantly less likely to choose the placed brands than the children in other conditions.

Across two experiments, we demonstrated that young children are incapable of using cognitive defence against the influence of product placement (Mallalieu, 2003) and appear to make choices based on immediately and readily observable perceptual features of the subjects (Roedder John, 1999). However, although previous research has documented that exposure to product placement leads to positive affect, Study 2 shows that children’s different moods when playing a video game can moderate product placement effectiveness and sometimes even lead to a negative judgment. This may be because the initially automatic positive reaction to the high fluency is overridden by the assimilation effect suggested by Srull (1983). Therefore, when asked to make a choice, although children in the negative mood might have an automatic positive affect towards the stimulus from prior exposure, they do not choose it because unhappy people are motivated to change their feelings (Isem, 1984) and do not have confidence in their judgment, so they are more likely to rely on external knowledge to make a judgment (Gasper, 2004; Adaval, 2001). The negative valence associated with the brand when they encoded the stimulus seems to override the positive reaction and lead to a negative judgment.

Because of its apparent influence, policy makers should consider the effects of product placement on children. This research moreover reports a boundary condition of the positive affect of product placement and processing fluency, such that managers should consider the context of the placement when brands are placed in games or films.

References


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Parents influence the behaviour of the child directly through introducing and facilitating consumer skills and indirectly influence their children through the child’s observation of behaviour [See for example: Ward, 1974; Gunter & Furnham, 1998; Roedder John, 1999]. However, there appears to be little if any research on the influence of siblings in relation to ‘socialising’ brothers and sisters. Although the social learning perspectives attribute consumption related behaviours to both environmental and social agent influences such as families and peers (Moschis & Smith, 1985).

Research on non-consumption situations (Palan, 1998) and studies that focus on the mundane and ‘day to day’ behaviour of families (Emery & Lloyd, 2001) are needed to expand our understanding of socialisation. This research focuses on the concept of borrowing and sharing within families and how this may influence and facilitate the socialisation of siblings within the household. Sharing has been addressed in terms of cultural norms (for example see: Gerrard 1989 & Belk 2000), impediments to sharing (Belk 1990) and gift giving (Belk, 1993 & Osteen 2002). However borrowing has featured less as a notion in research studies. To underpin the notion of borrowing and sharing and to provide a foundation on which to build this concept the facets of exchange theory have been considered.

To explore sibling relationships and socialisation influences this study considers brands, products or items traded inside the family home. Specifically the study explores the expectations siblings have of exchange (borrowing/sharing) and the extrinsic and intrinsic potency value derived from borrowing or sharing and examines subjective norms in the borrowing and sharing context.

Given the exploratory nature of this study and the complexity and sensitive nature of the phenomena (family life) in question, in-depth ‘paired’ interviews appeared to be the most appropriate method to address the issues raised. A local secondary school provided a purposive sample (Mills, 2001), a room and a timetable for the researcher to interview the respondents. The school was issued with the requirements for the sample and duly produced a cross sample of sisters varying in age, family type and socio-economic group. This research then involved 15 in-depth ‘paired’ interviews with 30 adolescent sisters.

The interviewees were pre-tasked and the girls were asked to consider a week before the interviews what items they have borrowed or shared with their siblings and where possible photo these products, brands or items. Photos (taken on mobile phones) were brought to the interviews and served as ice-breakers and as a way of building rapport quickly with the respondents. A collage of items the researcher thought the sisters may borrow or share (both high and low value items with the potential for various levels of involvement) was also introduced where appropriate during the interviews.

The concepts of sharing and borrowing were then explored utilizing the facets of exchange theory and communal relationships to underpin the semi-structured interview questions. The data analysis was conducted by identifying re-current themes in the data.

The overall findings from the interviews conducted with pairs of sisters illustrated that borrowing and sharing are commonplace amongst sisters but that whilst sharing is frequent between sisters it is quite a different concept to borrowing. Sharing was ‘direct’ learning proffered by the parent whereas borrowing was both an exchange and learning process between the sisters only. Together the sisters learnt skills from one another and developed strategies to manage the exchange process.

Intrinsic values of items within the household were identified (for example the TV remote control being exchanged for the cat). Products with extrinsic value were also illustrated (e.g. branded goods). Multiple strategies (including conflict avoidance, selective permission, the timing of request, decision making and covert borrowing) were employed to manage products or items with intrinsic or extrinsic value and most interestingly the sisters appeared to learn from one another (bidirectional learning) as opposed to the elder sister simply ‘teaching’ the younger. Perhaps not surprisingly, however, the older sister tended to be more ‘savy’ (in the know) in terms of borrowing and sharing. As ‘savy’ tends to increase with age (Brace et al, 2006) this finding supports current work on this aspect of consumer socialisation [For example see: Tinson & Nancarrow, 2005]. These concepts were readily understood and agreed by all the teenage respondents contributing to our understanding of socialisation and learning within the family.

This exploratory work concurs with the assertion of Clark & Dubash (1998) who posit that exchange is embedded in communal relationships and that these relationships will vary in strength. That is, where there appeared to be less harmony between the sisters the borrowing was more of a business arrangement (more akin to a selfish relationship as described by Batson, 1993). Of course this research has only considered a relatively small number of siblings and only females with the research being conducted in only one locale. It may be that with further research that considers males as well as females and families that have a gender mix in their family composition would find greater support for the work of Batson.

References


Cooperation and Conflict in Family Decision Making
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ABSTRACT
This study addresses the family dynamics of the decision making process, in particular the issues of cooperation and conflict, in both two parent and lone parent families. Thirty individual and family-group interviews were held (five two-parent families and twenty-five lone parent families). The families all had low incomes, heightening the importance placed on the consumer decision making process.

Findings are considered in relation to the interaction between couples as well as parent-child interaction. Overall, cooperation was a more prominent theme than conflict amongst the families and collectivist values tended to dominate.

It has taken researchers some time to realise that family decision types, processes and determinants are not merely an aggregation of individual purchase behaviours (Hall et al. 1995). Rather, many purchase decisions are influenced by other family members (Lackman and Lanasa 1993). Many studies on family consumer decision making have focused on husband and wife couples to consider the role each plays in making consumption choices (Burns 1992; Krampf, Burns and Rayman 1993; Menasco and Curry 1989). However, the focus on husband-wife interaction in decision making conceals the fact that there have been changes in family structure. Consumer research has not placed enough emphasis on the plurality of family structures (Ekström 2004) and little is known about the consumption patterns of lone parent families. One exception is Ahuja, Capella, and Taylor (1998) who found that the interaction between parents and children differs between lone parent and two parent families due to the greater likelihood of parent and children shopping together. This study addresses the family dynamics of the decision making process, in particular the issues of cooperation and conflict, in both two parent and lone parent families. The interaction between couples as well as parent-child interaction will be examined.

FAMILY DECISION MAKING
Some research has examined the influence of children and adolescents in family decision making and familial influence in the socialisation process (Ahuja et al. 1998; Beauty and Talpade 1994; Cotte and Wood 2004; Palan and Wilkes 1997). It has become accepted that children have an extensive involvement in consumer decision making within the family (Hall et al. 1995) and Shoham, Rose and Bakir (2004) report that children under 12 years old influence some $320 billion dollars worth of household products every year. This includes those products for which children are the final consumer (Mangleburg 1990). It has also been found that children may influence family decision making in one-off, and even expensive, purchase decisions such as cars or holidays by initiating the purchase, collecting information about alternatives and suggesting retail outlets (John 1999).

Research examining conflict in family decision making has found a tendency for husbands and wives to minimise conflict. As Commuri and Gentry (2000) suggested, conflict has been an elusive concept for researchers because adjustment towards the spouse’s preferences appears to be a common trend. Similarly a study by Belch, Belch, and Sciglimpaglia (1980) which also included children found that little disagreement occurs among family members during the decision process. Nevertheless, although serious conflict may be rare, Lee and Collins (2000) suggested that some form of family conflict is probable due to the combining of individual preferences.

Belch et al. (1980) demonstrated that level of disagreement will vary across product class. They found that disagreement was highest for high-involvement products such as vacations and cars and low for products such as appliances and breakfast cereal. Additionally, the amount of disagreement was low for decisions such as when to buy and where to but disagreements were higher in relation to how much money to spend.

Some research has considered the way in which conflict is resolved amongst the family. Sheth (1974) suggested that conflict may exist due to different purchase motives or evaluations about alternatives, and attempts to resolve conflict may vary according to the cause of the conflict. Sheth (1974) highlighted four types of conflict resolution; problem solving (involving further information search), persuasion (interaction among family members to resolve conflict), bargaining (conflict explicitly acknowledged) and politics (the formation of coalitions to isolate the family member with whom there is conflict and force this individual to join the majority). Belch et al. (1980) found that problem solving is the most popular method of conflict resolution with bargaining and persuasion less often considered. More recently, Holdert and Antonides (1997) found that strongly cohesive families were more likely than weakly cohesive families to evaluate alternatives jointly, consider each other’s desires, and have fewer conflicts. The most popular conflict resolution strategies among spouses were discussion and gathering information. Burns (1992) found that, in married couples, the wife has greater power and a higher degree of influence over the innovative consumer decisions made by her husband. Scanzoni (1979) noted that the greater the relationship, the greater the inevitability of conflict.

While some studies focus only on couples, Commuri and Gentry (2000) stated that measurement of conflict across all family members should become the norm. To obtain a comprehensive picture of family decision making, research needs to include the impact of children upon this process (Lackman and Lanasa 1993). Indeed Lackman and Lanasa (1993) go so far as to suggest that the exclusion of children will likely produce findings of questionable validity. Lee and Collins (2000) examined the impact of children on conflict resolution in the family decision making process. Results indicated that coalitions were a popular form of conflict resolution with fathers and elder daughters and mothers and sons working together to gain influence.

Palan and Wilkes (1997) discussed how adolescents employ a range of strategies to influence the outcome of family purchase decisions. These influence strategies are aimed at ensuring that parents cooperate with the wants of children. Bargaining strategies are presented as ways of ensuring mutual gain for both parties (for example, offer to do certain behaviours in exchange for some purchase) while persuasion strategies only result in gain for the persuader and consequently may involve some level of manipulation. Emotional strategies (e.g. guilt trips), and request strategies (e.g. expressing need) were also used to gain the cooperation of parents. As John (1999, 200) suggests, children learn to become successful “influence agents” through sophisticated negotiation strategies.

Although it has been suggested that families tend to minimise conflict (Commuri and Gentry 2000), much of the research in this area focuses on issues such as power and influence. Cooperation
has not been investigated to the same extent as conflict. Turning to research on communication studies, Sillars (1995, 377) suggested that “A familistic orientation is associated with collectivist values such as sharing, cooperation, unity, loyalty, respect, and restraint, as well as behavioral norms pertaining to mutual assistance, family obligations, subordination of individual needs to family needs, and preservation of family honor or dignity.” Previous studies have suggested that parents often display evidence of a familistic orientation, for example, Miller (1998) found that love is the motivating factor for the bulk of shopping practice. This study will explore the issues of both cooperation and conflict in family consumer decision making.

**METHODOLOGY**

In-depth interviews were held with thirty families. The study involved five two-parent families and twenty-five lone parent families (twenty-four headed by females). The respondents were all from low-income families with an average household income of approximately £150 per week. The scarce resources heightened the importance placed on the consumer decision making process. Both individual (16) and family (14) interviews were held, depending on the family structure. 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 two-parent families and families with older children (aged 11–18), it was possible to arrange an interview with multiple family members simultaneously, providing valuable information about the way in which the family interacts. It was hoped that including multiple family members in the interviews would lead to the discovery of more insightful findings. The interviewing of multiple family members can permit a deeper understanding of the family dynamics in terms of each person’s role and influence in consumption decisions. Interviews were conducted in respondents’ homes.

Due to the paucity of family research methods advice within consumer research, it was necessary to consult the sociology discipline. Sociological researchers tend to support a qualitative approach to family research (Daly and Leonard 2002; Franklin 1996; Goldstein et al. 1996; Handel 1996; Stacey 1998). Franklin (1996, 253) suggested two reasons why qualitative research methods are especially relevant to studying families. First, there are many aspects of family interactions that are hidden, or may be too complicated to be easily ascertained with quantitative methods. Secondly, family researchers are “outsiders” to family life but qualitative research methods afford glimpses of the “inside,” through either prolonged observations or interviews in field settings. As Bott and Robb (1957) suggested, unless one is invited inside a home, one cannot learn much about a family.

Handel (1996, 342) suggested that it remains rare to obtain data from each family member and consequently, “most family research is not family research but research on one of the component relationships in a family.” However, Handel (1996) advocated the use of whole-family methodology as this approach can result in insights and understanding not likely to be gained from other methodologies, especially if the problem under study involves multiple family members. He suggested that no one person speaks for a family because the family constructs its life based on the multiple perspectives of its members. Acock (1999) suggested that in-depth interviews are an effective way of examining how family relationships work, by studying everyday family processes and making comparisons across family members and across families.

Interview transcripts and notes taken by the researcher formed the foundation of analysis. Data analysis was not entirely separated from data collection and analysis began while interviewing was still under way. The overlapping of data collection and analysis is said to improve both the quality of the data collected and the quality of the analysis (Patton 2002). 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. This part-to-whole process involved two stages. First, each individual interview was interpreted. Secondly, separate interviews were related to each other and common patterns identified.

**FINDINGS**

The findings are divided into two main sections. The first section considers the interaction between couples in family decision making. The second section examines children’s input to food and clothing decisions.

**Parental Cooperation and Conflict**

There were five two-parent families included in the study. In these households the women tended to be responsible for managing the household budget and consumer decision making. For example, in a family interview with Fiona and Jason, Fiona (25, two children) claimed that she controls the budget because “women are more sensible with money.” Similarly, Denise stated, “I wouldn’t let him at it [money], he’d drink it” (43, two children) Interestingly, her husband, Barry, agreed with this statement, suggesting that if he had control of the budget he would act in ways that would be detrimental to the family’s financial situation: “I’d think I was a millionaire.”

Another reason given for women’s responsibility for financial management and decision making is that it simplifies the task. This issue was discussed in a family interview with Erin (29) and John (30, two children). Although John would allocate resources slightly differently if he was responsible for the budget, “I maybe wouldn’t buy the kids as much,” he is happy to leave financial planning under Erin’s control because “it saves the arguments if one person just looks after it.”

In all the two-parent families, there was little evidence of any conflict regarding consumer decision making. One reason for this is that there is little choice about the way in which money should be allocated. Due to restricted budgets, these families have to allocate virtually all of their money to food, clothes and other essentials with little remaining for “big” items and limited opportunities for holidays, entertainment and discretionary purchases. Although the emphasis is on low-involvement products, it has been recognised that everyday, mundane consumption can provide valuable insights to knowledge of buyer behaviour (Kleine et al. 1992, Miller 1998).

Findings reveal that the decision making process is not necessarily enjoyable or a pleasurable task. Some respondents viewed it more as work and did not appear to get any pleasure from having power over the family’s resources.

Some women feel that there is a lot of pressure associated with being responsible for family decision making:

Erin: “I think if we were to go back I wouldn’t like to do it, I would prefer to start off with John doing it. I don’t like doing it because then it’s me who has to worry about everything. I don’t think I would take charge of it if I had to do it all over again.”

Jodie: “sometimes I wish I could put it on his shoulders” (42, two children).
Being responsible for managing the household budget creates anxiety and stress for those involved and because of this some women would like to pass the burden on to their partners. In Erin’s case, her husband could not answer questions relating to the family’s income level, reinforcing how Erin bears sole responsibility for financial management.

Additionally, it appears that men adopt a more individualistic approach to money management and decision making while women are more communally orientated. For example, as mentioned above, Barry could not be trusted with money as he would spend it on alcohol. Similarly, in a family interview with Rebecca and James, Rebecca discussed how they organise their expenditure.

“He’s a smoker, he’ll get whatever he needs, you know what I mean, and then he’ll give me whatever’s left and I’ll go and sort out what we have to sort out” (23, two children).

In this case, it is evident that James prioritises his personal needs. Rebecca, on the other hand, concentrates more on the collective welfare of the family. As such, James’ individual strategies can conflict with Rebecca’s more communally orientated family budgeting strategies.

Due to the limited number of two-parent families involved in the study, these findings are by no means generalisable. Rather, one of the overriding issues arising from this study was the diversity of families. This diversity is also evident in relation to the parent-child interaction in consumer decision making.

Parent-Child Cooperation and Conflict

Cooperation was a more prominent theme than conflict amongst the families. Indeed, the word “conflict” should be treated with some caution— in many cases, there is potential for conflict to arise, but collectivist values tend to overrule and prevent this developing into serious disagreement. The discussion will focus decision making in relation to food and clothing.

Food and Family Decision Making

In many families, parents commented that they prefer to adopt an individual approach to decision making in relation to food provision. In some two-parent families, the father looked after the children while the mother did the food shopping for the family. Many lone parents also suggested that they find it easier and more cost-effective to shop for general household provisions alone. This is because expenditure tends to increase when they are accompanied by children:

Louise: “I usually go [food shopping] on my own but in the summer she has to come with me [5 year-old daughter]. She wants stuff I wouldn’t dream of buying, like a Barbie cake mix or something; she doesn’t throw a tantrum or anything but you feel sorry for her and then you buy it. My bill is definitely higher when she comes with me” (25, lone parent, one child).

Emma: “when I take the kids they want everything…. sometimes you have to put your foot down…. if they wanted grapes and those sorts of things I would let them get them… I’d rather go on my own, it’s easier” (36, lone parent, two children).

This suggests that there may be potential for conflict regarding the choice of food products desired by parents and children. However, as the comment by Louise suggests, it is not always necessary for a direct confrontation for the children’s influence to be felt. Rather, the issue of guilt can encourage parents to cooperate with children’s preferences. This appeared to be a common occurrence for parents in the study. Due to their low incomes, parents from both lone parent and two parent families made great efforts to ensure that their children were not disadvantaged or made to appear different to their peers.

Potential for conflict over food choice not only appeared to be an issue for families with young children but also for families with teenagers, as the following extract from 16 year old Joanne and her father (48, lone parent) illustrates:

Joanne: “I’m not allowed to go food shopping”
Philip: “it doesn’t work. I just get that wound up that I come home with a lot of stuff that I didn’t go for.”
Joanne: “I would get the same as my dad but then I would get a load of junk as well. I just buy loads of Jaffa Cakes and biscuits, typical teenager”
Philip: “yeah probably about £30 difference in the shopping basket.”

While adults want to obtain the best value options, children “want treats all the time” and “always want to try new things.” Although shopping alone is an easier option this is not always possible for lone parents, especially those who have no extended family network to help with childminding. Melissa described how she overcomes this problem.

“If they pick something and it’s dear and I know there’s a cheaper brand I’ll switch it in the trolley before they notice and then when we get home they don’t notice” (31, lone parent, five children).

In other words, the children in this family are made to feel involved in the decision making process but this is not carried through to the actual purchase. The children in this family are all below the age of seven so this pretence of involvement may not be an option in other families with older children.

Further rationale for cooperation with children is because it makes better financial sense to purchase products that children will eat rather than waste food:

Janet: “I would go for the brand names rather than the cheap brands because they’ll not eat them. There are beans at 12p a tin, and Heinz at 50p a tin; I have to pay the 50p, it would be stupid buying the other ones because they won’t eat them” (38, lone parent, three children).

Ironically the purchase of more expensive options can represent the most rational choice for these consumers. To summarise, in relation to food shopping, it appears that cooperation is most evident on the part of the parents.

Clothes and Family Decision Making

Some parents discussed a similar situation in relation to clothing. Like food, it appears that parents are sometimes forced to cooperate with their children rather than risk wastage.

Susan: “she is very particular about clothes…. half the things I’d buy her I’d have to give them away or bring them back because she’s very fussy. I spend a fortune on clothes and I don’t really see the reason why I should” (23, lone parent, two children).

Children from a young age are involved in the decision making process for clothing. Findings suggested that children find enjoy-
ment in the shopping process and like to take on the role of consumers. When asked to describe a typical shopping trip with her two daughters, Emma responded as follows:

“Danielle would be on a high because she’s getting something new. She’s very fussy…. I just stand there and let her wander round and she comes to me if she likes something and she tries it on and she gets it. Usually she has an idea what she wants, maybe she’d been in the town with friends and seen it. Danielle’s buzzing, she’s still hyper, wanting more, wanting to go somewhere else” (36, lone parent, two children).

In this study, there was little evidence of any bargaining strategies like those mentioned by Palan and Wilkes (1997). As Emma suggested above, if her daughter likes something “she gets it.” Indeed Emma actively discourages strategies of this nature:

“I don’t get them to do anything for me round the house to earn money….. they have friends who do the dishes but I just do that myself….. my mummy would have done it for me, she done everything for us when we were young, I think they’re time enough.”

Again, one possible explanation for this may be the guilt factor. The desire for children not to be affected by the family’s limited financial resources may lead to overcompensating as parents are willing to cooperate with the desires of children.

Some findings suggest that conflict is slightly more prominent between parents and older children. This tends to occur once children have reached an age when they can go shopping with friends and the mother is therefore no longer directly involved in the purchase decision.

Interviewer: “would you go clothes shopping with your daughter?”
Eva: “sometimes but very rarely now….. most time she would go herself…..I would say ‘oh you’re not wearing that’ but her friends are getting it and she’s at the age now, she’s 12, she would go with her friends and what they’re wearing. Loads of stuff I find horrible but that’s what they’re wearing” (45, lone parent, three children).
Catherine: “if she goes with her friends she brings the wrong things back and then you have to go and change them. Before she goes I say ‘do not go to a shop where you cannot get your money returned.’ …..she comes with the wrong thing and will say ‘everybody else thought it was nice’ but it’s not. I try to coax her into going back to get it changed. That’s the last thing I say to them before they go, make sure you go to a shop where you can get your money back, if not, don’t spend it” (40, lone parent, three children).

This suggests that older children may be influenced more by their friends and peers than their parents. Once this happens, conflict and disagreement over product choice is more noticeable. The potential for conflict over purchase location also becomes more probable once children become older. Perhaps this is particularly noticeable due to the financial circumstances of the families in this study. The adults generally frequent stores that are known to be more affordable. On the other hand, children may be more influenced by the store image and reputation. In some families, parents make attempts to ensure that children evaluate all alternatives when engaging in consumer decision making.

As with food, conflict over choice of clothing appears to be minimal. Some parents make attempts to teach their children good consumer skills and others are willing to cooperate with what their children desire. Again, the diversity of families was evident.

Findings suggest that level of conflict may be dependent on the children’s understanding of the family’s financial situation. Some children are aware of the financial difficulties experienced by the family and consequently curtail their demands leading to greater cooperation in the decision making process. In other families, children’s lack of appreciation of the value of money creates conflict. Amanda has encountered this problem with her 16 year-old daughter, Michelle. The interview with Amanda took place during the school vacation period and Michelle was unsure about whether or not she would return to school for the new academic year. This was causing some family tension.

“She doesn’t want to work, she just wants to be handed the money. I’ve told her that if she doesn’t get a job before the middle of August she’ll be going back to school” (36, lone parent, two children).

Although Michelle originally agreed to participate in the interview, she did not turn up at the scheduled time, despite her mother’s request. Consequently it was not possible to obtain her perspective of the family’s situation.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

It may be assumed that, as found in previous research, level of disagreement would be high in relation to how much money is spent (Belch et al. 1980), especially given the financial restrictions of respondents. However, in many families there was little evidence of serious conflict. The assumption of conflict is inherent in past family decision making literature with research highlighting the conflict resolution strategies that families may employ (Sheth 1974). One of the main contributions of this research is that families also employ a range of conflict avoidance strategies that prevent any disagreement arising in the first instance. These include giving one person control over the budget, cooperating with the wants of children or concealing consumer decisions that may be met with disagreement from other family members. This suggests that potential for conflict is not always realised. Many families in the study adopted a familistic orientation (Sillars 1995) to consumer decision making where collectivist values dominated.

This study contributes to understanding of interaction among couples in relation to consumer decision making. Previous research in this area has tended to focus on power struggles with each party striving for control over the family’s budget. These findings provide an alternative perspective by highlighting that responsibility for the family’s consumption decisions is not always viewed in a positive light due to the stress associated with this task. Although this study focused on low-income consumers, this opinion may not be exclusive to this group. The increased choice and complexity of financial products, the squeezing of household budgets created by rising utility costs and high levels of consumer debt all point to the difficulty of this task.

Findings illustrate the complex relationship between cooperation and conflict in family decision making involving children. Although parents and children may have different consumption
goals and conflicting preferences in terms of product and store choice, more emphasis is placed on ensuring cooperation. Additionally, the involvement of children in the family decision making process can run deeper than simply product choice. Rather, parent-child interaction can also be aimed at helping children develop good consumer skills such as improving understanding of the value of money, improving levels of product knowledge and emphasising the importance of comparing alternatives. Ensuring children are equipped with appropriate consumer skills is indicative of good parenting for some of the adults in the study.

The findings highlight the diversity of families. For example, in some families the choice of food has the potential to create conflict, in other families parents cooperate with the children’s preferences without question. In some families, children have an understanding of the need to maximise resources and in other families they are a hindrance to this process. Each family has its own unique ideology in relation to structure, background, values, communication patterns, roles and responsibilities etc. As such, the decision making process varies from family to family, highlighting the impossibility of generating general theories about family consumption behaviour. Indeed, sociologists have suggested that the increased diversity of family forms indicates that “the family” does not exist (Bernardes 1997, 28) and the incessant use of the term “the family” implies that all families have the same format and denies any reality or validity to other forms of lived relations (Muncie and Sapsford 2003).

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Living the Extended Present: An Interpretation of ‘Time-Linked’ Consumption Practices’ in Professional Dual Career Families

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“‘It is a lifestyle many busy couples will recognise, a phenomenon familiar to dual-income couples: children are passed between parents like a baton in a relay race, rarely spending time all together…’

Cathy Hinsliff, The Observer, November 26th 2006

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Consumer research to date has reflected narrow conceptualizations of the family as a consuming unit (Price and Epp 2005). Research has focused upon decision making within the family and family life cycle transitions (Ekstrom 2005) where the family is taken to be an already evident construct. Traditional, highly gendered and normative ideals of this family construct (i.e. working father, mother as homemaker) are reflected in the literature (Commuri et al 2005). For example, Gentry et al (1996:67) argue that, in consumer and marketing research the ‘happy’ nuclear family with traditional family roles is the normative model of the family. Reindfleisch et al (1997:312) also suggest that ‘despite the rapid and dramatic changes in the structure of the American family over the past 30 years… consumer researchers have largely neglected the issue of how alternative family forms influence consumer behaviour’. More recent research has highlighted that ‘a plurality of families’ and family forms exist today (Ekstrom 2005), and that there is a requirement to consider more carefully these very different family forms and their specific consumption practices. This includes how people connected as what might be called “kin” enact the family, “family roles” and “family life” shifting the discourse on the family away from “the family” as an essential construct towards research understanding the maintenance and enactment of the family identity construct (Price and Epp 2005). However, despite this exciting new research, it seems that research on the family is becoming less interesting to consumer researchers and is, in fact, declining (Ekstrom 2005, Commuri and Gentry 2000).

Gentry and McGinnis (2003) have recently argued that further family research is required in several areas. One of those areas concerns “peer marriages” or those marriages where “partners are social equals, have careers, share equal responsibility for finances and other decision making, and where the husband assumes far greater responsibility for child-rearing” (see also Schwartz 1998). As a family form, peer couples with children, defined here as “professional dual career families” have risen exponentially. Professional dual-career couples, have “jobs which require a high degree of commitment and which have a continuous developmental character.” (Rapoport and Rapoport 1969) with a lifestyle career pattern including high levels of career responsibility and personal investment of time and energy (Johnson, Kaplan, and Tussel 1979; Bird and Schurman-Crook 2005). Professional dual career families have attracted a significant amount of attention from the media, the public sector and from the academy, much of which focuses upon the negative aspects of this lifestyle particularly with regard to the ideas of time scarcity and juggling behaviours. Media attention has particularly scapegoated the professional working mother in this respect, and to an extent the consumer literature adds to this underlying discourse. Thompson 1996, for example, as well as others (Joag, Gentry, and Ekstrom 1991, Joag, Gentry, Gentry et al 1996, Commuri and Gentry, 2005) predominantly focus on mothers only and their struggle to manage time between work and family. In focusing on the mother, these studies implicitly position women only as functioning and managing in both the work and domestic spheres and thus subtly act to reinscribe the domestic sphere as the feminine domain. These studies therefore do not consider the specificity of professional dual career families where it has been documented that fathers undertake an increased level of childcare (Gatrell 2005, Hochschild 1997) and interdependence of roles between mother and father is evident (Bird and Schurman-Crook 2005). Research on the dual career family and the division of domestic labour is a contested field and in professional dual career households, management of, and juggling between the domestic sphere and the work sphere has been reported as highly complex (Sullivan 2000, Windebank 2001).

In trying to develop an understanding of the literature we kept returning to the issue of time and how time was being conceptualised. We concluded that the idea of “time scarcity” in these families underpinned much of the research and often was presented as the root of their problem. From our own experience as professional working mothers we could endorse the idea that time was scarce in these households, but we both felt that the understanding of the phenomenon of time needed a more nuanced (and balanced) analysis and that the idea of “time scarcity” as a central factor might be a little simplistic. Supporting this, Southerton (2003) argues in his study of suburban households that although his respondents all presented narratives of “time harriedness”, in depth examination of their experiences of this phenomenon led him to assess that this did not automatically equate to “time scarcity” and that their consumption, management and experience of time was highly complex.

This complexity of time and the management of work and home by professional couples has recently been conceptualised as “the extended present” (Brennan 2002, 2005). Time, as seen through the lens of the extended present, is not a linear and measurable construct, but rather a subjective experience. Analysing the extended present means focusing upon the nature and intensity of the time experienced, and how time itself is constructed through activities, practices and experiences. In the extended present, there is a heightened sense of the present, and the past and future are backgrounded and often distorted (Brown 1998) the focus is on the here and now, activities are viewed in relation to the present, not the long term future, work/home times and practices become fragmented, entwined, complex and multiple and not easily explained in terms of simple “time scarcity”.

From our reading of the literature on the family and on “working mothers” and this literature’s constructions and conceptualisations of time it became clear that there was a requirement for consumer research to develop a better understanding of professional dual career families, that is mothers and fathers, than was currently available and that focusing on time had the potential to make a contribution to this area of research. The particular issue that concerned us initially was to understand the management and experience of time in professional dual career families and to look for evidence of “the extended present”. Following this initial analysis, we then sought to interpret the kinds of consumption practices employed by these families to help manage “time” and enact “the family” within the extended present. The study found that rather than being slaves to time scarcity, professional dual career parents, that is, both mothers and fathers, actively ‘speed up’
and ‘slow down’ time through particular consumption practices to take more control of their family lives and times. It presents the extended present and the concept of fast and slow time as a way to theorise the lives of professional dual career families and gives an account of how consumption practices are utilised in family time management processes within the extended present that can enrich consumer research on families and familial consumption.
Ambivalence in Death Ritual Consumption
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Through an analysis of depth interviews with bereaved informants we investigate the interpersonal and intrapersonal emotional interplays that occur in the negative emotional space. Consumption occasions in which ambivalence has been identified in extant research have been in positive emotional environments (Celsi, Rose and Leigh 1993; Joy 2001; Otnes, Lowrey and Shrum 1997). In contrast, we explore how unwanted positive emotions intrude on, and sometimes are allowed into, the negative emotional spaces of death. Western death ritual performances are complex and highly emotional contexts characterized by negative emotions (Walter 1996). Social requirements compel mourners to engage in such activities (Kastenbaum 1995), and ritual plans are often finalized under stress and time constraints (Gentry, Kennedy, Paul and Hill 1994). These characteristics distinguish death rituals from other consumption activities and suggest the possibility of new insights on consumer ambivalence that may not be easily observed in extant positive emotion biased studies.

We draw on Otnes et al. (1997) to suggest that the sequential and simultaneous occurrence of diverse emotions that mourners experience represent ambivalence. We show that although death rituals are ambivalent contexts they are not amenable to cleanly applying coping strategies to remove negative emotions, as per previous research (e.g. Mick and Fournier 1998).

Our analysis suggests that death rituals facilitate a general feeling of communion among ritual participants. Further investigations into the internal dynamics of this temporary support network demonstrate how the feeling of community may only offer a false sense of security. The positive feelings the community engenders are mitigated by the knowledge that death is the primary reason for its existence, and that it offers only a transient source of fulfillment. This is complicated further by the fact that consumers are unable to modify the script that defines their roles and actions in the social drama that is the funeral. Consumers have limited control over who enters the consumption space. Every member is not welcomed equally and the presence of undesirable or unwanted people can heighten ambivalence. In addition, struggles with new social roles result in significant emotional conflict within people. Informants express discomfort about allowing unacceptable positive emotions to invade the negative space of death, in conformity with assumed socio-cultural rules of such engagements. These observations lead us to suggest that while consumer ambivalence in death rituals is grounded partly in the ritual itself, the false sense of community and security that derives from socio-cultural norms are more potent sources of discomfort and ambivalence.

Our research findings contribute to our understanding of consumer ambivalence in a number of ways. Firstly they augment the field’s predominant ambivalence framework developed in Otnes et al. (1997) by demonstrating myriad roles that other participants can play in causing consumer ambivalence over the course of the ritual. We also show that countervailing emotional interplays can occur in a negative emotional space, in addition to the supposedly positive occasions and spaces predominant in consumer research. Indeed our results demonstrate that it may often be misleading to definitively label a space as either positive or negative without sufficient consideration of its associated emotional nuances. The negative space that the funeral comprises is shown to become a site for positive emotion through social interactions, yet this can in turn lead to the materialization of different types of negative emotion.

A point of interest is informants’ consistent expression that they did not welcome positive emotional migration, and would have preferred to wallow in the negative space. The positive feelings that intruded on the negative space were often considered inappropriate for grievers. Unable to navigate this aspect associated with their new social role informants tried to relegate the positive emotions beneath the negative ones deemed more fitting. This active desire to suppress positive emotions in favor of experiencing negative emotions runs contrary to the implied positivity outcome that consumers will desire when feeling both positive and negative emotions (Mick and Fournier 1998; Otnes et al. 1997). The disinclination to experience positive emotions has been documented previously in bereavement research (Hallam and Hockey 2001; Gentry, Kennedy, Paul and Hill 1995) and directly challenges the economic man conviction that we continually strive for gratification and utility maximization.

We demonstrate that instances exist in which ambivalence can arise from a consumption experience based on consumers’ knowledge that the positive feelings arising out of the experience are temporary. Providers of experiences in which the creation of a sensation of temporary community is one of its core offerings (e.g. Arnould and Price 1993) must remain attentive to the potential ambivalent feelings the expected or actual dissolution of the community may cause. If the positive feeling one gets from an experience is grounded in the awareness that one is experiencing something atypical, this feeling may be jeopardized by the very awareness of its ephemeral character, engendering ambivalent feelings in the consumer. Consumers’ enjoyment may be consistently attenuated by the knowledge that the end of the consumption period means an underwhelming return to their quotidian lives.

Our findings also demonstrate the importance of providing personal flexibility during extended encounters. The sense that the occasion was out of informants’ control was a significant contributor to ambivalence. During extended experiences, individuals must be granted sufficient leeway to deviate from prescribed scripts, or tools provided to allow them to craft their own script. Overall this paper provides a more multi-dimensional understanding of ambivalence. It identifies the nuanced emotional interplay occurring in consumption settings and recommends due consideration be granted to the multiplicity of possible emotional triggers and outcomes.

References


The Importance of Being Earnest and Playful: Consuming the Rituals of the West Indian American Day Carnival and Parade

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigates various meanings of the West Indian American Day Carnival and Parade that takes place in Brooklyn on Labor Day. The ritual process of producing and consuming the Carnival and Parade is sacred to both participants and spectators. It is a kaleidoscope of culture and experience, produced and consumed interdependently, begetting abundant cultural meanings. Based on ethnographic account, the paper discusses the following: the Carnival as ritual process; multiculturalism and ethnocentrism; authenticity and hybridization; the meaning of “Bacchanal”; and the importance of being earnest and playful in consuming the ritual.

INTRODUCTION

In the present paper, I investigate the meanings of the West Indian American Day Carnival and Parade, a creolized consumer ritual which takes place in Brooklyn on Labor Day, the first Monday in September. The Parade is a rebereration of the carnival in their indigenous islands that is celebrated during Shrovetide before the Roman Catholic holiday of Ash Wednesday. The imported, secular replica in New York, commonly called the Labor Day Parade by locals, typically starts with the Borough President’s predictably trite greeting, such as “Welcome to Brooklyn, the home of West Indians in America,” blasting through immense speakers on a truck. It is an apt greeting that evokes the decorous beginning of the liturgical ritual. Every year, this bacchanalian festive event draws a deluge of participants and spectators, not only from the approximately two-million Caribbean-Americans in New York City, but also visitors from outside the participating ethnic communities. Forceful rhythms of soca and calypso, colorful and thematic costumes of the carnival, frenzied marchers jumping up to dance “road march” steps, vendors of Trinidadian roti and Jamaican beef patties, and organic pandemonium all constitute the genius loci of the nation’s largest single-day event. While carnival participants spend as long as a half year planning the event, the delirium of masqueraders and gaieties of the spectators consumed experientially and interdependently are short-lived; the intense pleasure and excitement of the emotional intercourse die before night falls completely in the expansive autumn sky of Labor Day.

An alternate way to apprehend the West Indian American Day Carnival and Parade is to critically examine it as a syncretic, creolized consumer ritual in which diverse participants and spectators both engage in and negotiate the meaning-making of the ritual in today’s globalizing yet pluralistic social context. Creolization is a synthesis of meanings and forms from disparate sources, traditional and contemporary, and foreign and local (Hannerz 1987; Ger and Belk 1996). The interplay between imported and indigenous cultures, absorption and integration of foreign with local meanings, begets new behaviors and ways of thinking. Immigrants, a source of cultural influx, alternate their identities as consumers by swapping elements of creolization (Oswald 1999). While the concept originated in the social and cultural history of particular colonial societies in the Americas and the discourse of linguists, creole concepts have become more general in their application in social science including consumer research. Both material objects and rituals are subject to creolized adaptations in today’s globalizing world for both affluent and less affluent nations.

Consumer rituals are practices that follow established procedures, ranging from individual habitual activities to family celebrations, cultural holidays, and religious rites, according to the typology developed by Rook (1985). Both things and actions involved in rituals communicate symbolic meanings (Rook and Levy 1983; Gainer 1995). As with any other human experience, culture mediates the interpretation of consumers’ ritual experience: Human experience after all is a negotiation of culturally constructed symbols (Tharp and Scott 1990, 47). In the age of globalization, rituals also migrate from one nation to another via expatriates and globalizing media. One of the most striking examples of creolized consumer rituals is contemporary Christmas celebrations around the world (Miller 1993). Modern American Christmas celebrations are an amalgam of various European pre-Victorian celebrations, from German Christmas trees, English greeting cards, etc. (Belk 1989). In a large part of the non-Christian world, Christmas is celebrated with its symbolic items but without its religious connotation (Moerman and Skov 1993). Its commercialized accompanying figure Santa Claus metamorphoses into different persona depending on the destination he travels to: Noel Baba in Turkey, Old Wise Santa Man in China, or Uncle Chimney in Tokyo. Creolization of another major American holiday, Thanksgiving, is less prominent, but recipes of the holiday meal reflect the hybridization of mingling cultures (Wallendorf and Arnould 1991). Traditional consumer rituals in other nations, such as henna-night weddings in Turkey (Üstünler, Ger, and Holt 2000) and death rituals in Ghana (Bonsu and Belk 2003) and China (Zhao and Belk 2007) equally indicate the hybridization of foreign cultures and abundant signs of materialism which manifested in post-modern consumer rituals.

The West Indian American Day Carnival and Parade is a unique example of such consumer rituals. It is a bricolage of meanings and forms which embodies often paradoxically conflicting values. The investigation of the West Indian American Day Carnival and Parade combines together several streams of research inquiry within consumer research. One very prominent aspect of the Carnival and Parade is its emphasis on the production and consumption of ethnic subculture within the multicultural environment and exchange processes within shared experience, interesting both to consumer and marketing researchers. Second, the Parade is extremely conducive to provoking sensory and sensual pleasure in the enthralling atmosphere: the ethnic foods and feasts, overwhelmingly gigantic floats, bright decorations of masked kings and queens, gaudy displays of provocative dancers on trucks, scanty costumes of marchers, pulsating electronic music blaring from speakers, and the laughter and roaring outcry of the crowds. Third, the current study aims to complement the rather slim research efforts made in the area of carnival and parade rituals. Although both participants and spectators of civic and cultural rituals (e.g., Super Bowl Sunday, homecoming games, St. Patrick’s Day, Memorial Day parades) are highly involved in their consumer behavior (Rook 1985), examinations of these rituals have been somewhat neglected. Academic consumer research is rarely dedicated to investigating such rituals with the following noteworthy exceptions: Halloween (Belk 1990, 1994), Lesbian and Gay Pride Day Parade (Kates and Belk 2001), The Florida Classic (Stamps and
Arnould 1998) and Mardi Gras (Williams et al. 1998). By studying the meaning of the Carnival, I hope to learn much not only about the consumption per se that occurs within the ritual, but about the overlap and interplay of many current consumption theories as well. Therefore, in this paper, I deconstruct and dissect the contents of the Carnival, examine the semantics, and reconstruct the consumer ritual with renewed meanings in today’s pluralistic multicultural social context.

METHODS

The intention of this study is to elucidate the multifaceted meanings of the Carnival ritual that are culturally and socially constructed. As such, ethnography was considered appropriate for the methodology (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994). Thus, the study involved field trips, participant observation, on- and offsite interviews before, during, and after Labor Day weekend. During the preparation period prior to Labor Day weekend, for example, trips were made to one of the mas camps, venues where the masqueraders’ costumes are created and where the band members and others from the community congregate for various reasons. Several days preceding the Parade, trips were made to the Museum Grounds, a large parking lot where abovementioned starting events and festivities of the Parade would take place. The Parade on Labor Day Monday took place on a wide four-lane road: Eastern Parkway, from Utica Avenue to Grand Army Plaza. At these occasions and locations, ad-hoc unstructured interviews were conducted with creators of costumes, artists of pseudo-monarch’s costumes, masqueraders, retailers in tents and on the street, the audience of the competition and spectators of the Parade. Interviews were audio-recorded or video-recorded, and subsequently transcribed for verbatim analysis. Conversations with informants who refused to electronically record their responses were recorded manually in my field notes. I also recorded my own observations and feelings into the audio-recorder. In addition, I took 99 still images and 20 video clips of the Parade, and 52 still images of the Dimanche Gras. These visual data were used to decode and analyze the visual images of objects and body languages of consumers that were symbolically communicated with other participants and spectators of the ritual. After the Carnivals, follow-up interviews were conducted individually and in groups.

Not including ad-hoc interviews on the street and on the Museum Grounds, I formally interviewed, in total, eighteen informants, half of whom were members of the Trinidadian Genesis Mas. I gained access to the mas camp through a colleague of mine, a native Trinidadian who had been a member since 2003, once was the secretary, of the Genesis Mas, and regularly played a mas in the Labor Day Parade. The other half consisted of natives or descendants of West Indians from Jamaica, Barbados, Haiti, and Trinidad who had regularly participated in the carnival in the past in Brooklyn and in their indigenous islands. In addition, a group of six Jamaican informants were interviewed in a focus group setting, moderated by a graduate student for his course project, where I stayed undisguised as an observer of the interview session. These informants were selected as they had claimed a high level of emotional involvement in the Carnival and Parade. Of twenty three informants, fifteen, or approximately two thirds were male. The known age range was between 12 and 67, but most informants preferred not to explicitly disclose their age. Instead, some described their age as “very old” or “above twenty five.” These interviews lasted from 15 minutes to 60 minutes. All the names of informants mentioned in the remaining part of this paper are pseudonyms.

THE CARNIVAL AND CONSUMER RITUALS

The ethnographic study of the Carnival, which consisted of multiple methods of post-modern, holistic assessment of the social phenomena, revealed that the symbolic aspects of the Carnival and its experiential consumption possess complex, multi-faceted meanings and dimensions. The omnipresence of multimodal and multivocal cultural codes in the narratives of the informants suggested webs of the multilayered organic human sociality within which consumers drift and manipulate their identities. Interpretations of the semantics are structured as follows: 1) Production and consumption of the Carnival as the ritual process, 2) multiculturalism and ethnocentrism, 3) authenticities and hybridization, 4) the meaning of “bacchanal,” and 5) the importance of being earnest and playful in consuming the ritual.

Production and Consumption of the Carnival as the Ritual Process

There are multiple groups of people involved with the production and consumption of the Carnival to varying degrees. Participants and spectators are two broad categories. But spectators, both West Indians and the “Others,” may move beyond the barriers and merge with participants of the Carnival, creating one big mass of chaos. When the peripheries are blurred, spectators may take advantage to integrate themselves into the social world of the Carnival and instrumentally, or playfully, manipulate their identities. Thus, identities of participants and spectators are variant and unstable; they are dual at times being conflated at others. The most highly involved groups of participants with the production of the ritual are those from Trinidad and Tobago, where the Carnival is celebrated most extravagantly. Penetrating deeply to the domain of these producer groups was essential for understanding the structure, and anti-structure, of the ritual since they were the focal point of the Carnival and the axis of centrifugal forces to empower urban honties, both spectators and participants, in the field.

Expeditions to Flatbush. Genesis Mas is one of approximately twenty Trinidadian adult mas bands in Brooklyn. Their mas camp, the venue where mas costumes are designed and assembled, is located in the East Flatbush area of Brooklyn, where the community is highly populated with West Indians and other descendants of Africa. The existence of the mas camp is obvious to pedestrians with its loudly colorful and shining costumes and helmets displayed in the large show window facing the main street. The theme chosen by the Genesis Mas was Odysseus. Somewhat confusingly, there was no entrance in front of the building. The door, which directly led to a one large, undivided room on the premises, was on the side street, as if to suggest a hideaway, available only for members of the communitas, or the unstructured community of equal individuals who share the intense community spirit (Turner 1969). Inside the camp, rows and rows of costumes, helmets, arms and armors, and other props for masqueraders who were to disguise themselves as Trojan, Spartan, Helen of Troy, Athena, and the other Olympian gods were hung from the ceiling and on the wall, waiting to be tried on and chosen by masqueraders. A board member estimated the total number of costume to be approximately 75 to 100 sets. When the glittering sun was high, and worn-out brownstones projected short shadows onto the street in humid Flatbush, a few band members showed up in the camp to finish making costumes. As the sunset approached, band members, one after the other, strode into the camp, and soon the space was completely packed, heated with their loud, bawdy laughter and the blasting soca music. Some males quenched their thirst with beer while others quickly swallowed take-out rice and peas before starting their nightly craftwork.
The narratives of my informants, the members of the Genesis Mas originally from Trinidad, revealed emergent themes associated with the ritualistic dimensions of the Carnival as well as its significance in sustaining their lives as immigrants in the U.S. The most important aspect of the Parade is its process, which begins here in Brooklyn when the Carnival in Trinidad ends and which completes at the end of the Labor Day Carnival. The ritual script calls for beginning by deciding on the theme of the Mas for the year in the first place. At Genesis Mas, for example, eight members of the board selected the theme of Odysseus this year, after having Egyptian and African themes in the preceding years. Since the nature of the ritual is playful, the accuracy of the historicity is not a terribly important issue. The front surface of shields hung on the wall uniformly depicted not the gorgon but Romulus and Remus sucking milk from the she-wolf. Ian, who selected the Spartan costume, said, “It is a Roman character.” When asked why they selected Odysseus this year, Aaron, who handles the Public Relations of the Mas, gave me a somewhat inarticulate answer: “Well, this is Trojan. Everybody knows that the Trojan War was a Greek War. See, Greeks were similar to Romans. Basically, Greeks were the Trojans.” When he was asked to clarify the connection between Greeks and Trinidadians, he grinned and confided: “Well, the main thing is costume and carnival.” Band members were indeed interested in historical themes; they seemed to trigger them to search for their own roots in their minds, wandering in their collective memory of slavery and emancipation, associated with the words history and carnival. Aside from historicity, however, the most important thing is that “[band members] can do all these, and all these are done by crafts and by [their] hands.” As Turner (1988) points out, it is conspicuous creation that is the central force of the ritual process in pre-industrial societies, while conspicuous and excessive consumption is the prominent feature of rituals in the industrialized society.

**Liminal or Liminoid?** The importance of production can not be overstated, given the time and money that participants invest in various aspects of the carnival during the long preparation period. Moreover, there are a lot of give-and-take matters in the Carnival, which create, strengthen, confirm, and recreate the human communities in the communitas. Although no explicit tangible gift item is involved, imponderable daily reciprocal activities function as a means of symbolic exchange (Malinowski 1984). A male informant contended that large corporate sponsors do not understand the semantics of the ritual process, but “small guys” out there on the Parkways, who are involved all year around with the give and take of ideas, fundraising, and parties do. Participants seem to be proud that “nobody is big” but every man is the same average “small guy.” At this annually recurring ritual, as a matter of fact, every small person’s status is elevated, as in the inversion of social hierarchy postulated by Turner (1969). The intense comradeship and egalitarianism present in the narratives suggest that during the annual ritual process, the sacred period of the year, participants are reduced to homogenized common men and go through the liminal stage to gain and regain life-sustaining power and energy while renegotiating the self-identity by reflecting the heritage. In this regard, the duality of the Carnival should be noted. For mere spectators, especially those who belong to the “Others,” the Carnival is a liminoid phenomenon: it is a secular one-day quirky cultural event which is an object of the intellectualized modern industrial leisure (Turner 1992).

**Multiculturalism and Ethnocentrism**

**Unification of the Caribbean, Tightening of Human Bonds.** Functionally the Carnival is polysemous; it is the opportunity to integrate different cultures within the Caribbean, to reach out to other cultures beyond the Caribbean, both the local American and other cultures on the global sphere. The selection of the themes by Genesis Mas in the past years exemplified the contention. There was a carnival troupe from Brazil, masqueraders from the labor union (mostly Caribbean) who portrayed the progression of health care, and Chinese masqueraders in yellow satin kung-fu suits who demonstrated the dragon dance in the Parade while subtly placarding their new-age religion. The informants expressed varied opinions regarding the issues of unification and integration of cultures among the Islands and beyond. One of the board members of the Mas considers the Carnival an agent of the diffusion of the culture: “Well, it means that we are able to carry out our culture in different culture and pass it to the people who are not aware of it and exposed to a different people we meet in America. Remember in the United States people from all over the world, so we project it and exposing to them, so they can have an idea of different cultures Trinidad have.” One female, an active and regular participant of the Mas band, does not believe in such idealistic efficacy of the Carnival since “people are who they are” and wish to remain as such with their national identity, although she believes that the common human conception and ideal of “having a good time together” works, uniting all the participants and spectators, and strengthening their human bonds.

**Ambivalence about Self and Others.** Cultural pride and longing for national recognition is another theme that emerged in informants’ narratives while discussing the unification and integration of the Caribbean. The cultural pride expressed by all the informants was quite strong. Aaron, for instance, raised his voice when he said “We are known for playing pans. We are number one for the pans, and they can’t take that from us,” and “They can not be Trinidad” while expressing his contrary sentiment, “Island has to respect each others” because they share the same cultural background while “each island represents certain things in certain ways. So we represent the Carnival, and the soca music, you know.”

A female member, Lisa, contended that “For most of them, Carnival is to have a good time, but when you put money and time for the costumes, sure you do feel cultural pride.”

**Ethnocentrism.** Furthermore, some informants, especially highly involved band members expressed resentment towards those who had been opposed to having the annual carnival on Eastern Parkway. One female was excited when she started to confess her feeling towards intrusion of the “Others”; her monologue began with her sentiment to commercial intrusion, but it jumped quickly to the intrusion of “some individuals in America,” a euphemistic expression for neighboring ethnic minorities that battle over implicit territorial borders. Lisa alluded to uneasy coexistence and long-standing tensions between Hassidic Jews and West Indians in the Crown Heights and East Flatbush areas. The worldwide headquarters of the Chabad-Lubavitch Hasidic Jews is located right on the Carnival route, and their hostility and anger towards the entire Carnival were evident in their determined indifference, and stern and austere appearance, as if the Carnival triggers their memory of the Crown Heights Riot of 1991.

**Authenticities and Americanization**

The meaning of authenticity and the importance attached to it varied from one to the other. Informants seemed to agree on which aspects of the Carnival were authentic or Americanized. The creation of handmade costumes and other objects from scratch and the participation of the entire community in this creation process are two interrelated factors that together constitute the authenticity of the Carnival. Mickey, the artist of the band, who came to the Mas
camp early in the day and stayed into the evening to work on craftwork, repeatedly emphasized the importance of being perfect in his band’s artistic endeavors. Such enthusiasm may result from the fact that consumers in celebrations “often affirm the joyous outpouring of their spirit and the creative play of their imagination in a variety of the performing and decorative arts” (Dorson 1982, 33). Nevertheless, facets of this ritual creation process of the Carnival have metamorphosed into a hybridized product of Brooklyn. Comparing to Trinidad, Aaron complained:

Back home … you have more of a group of people, the organizer. See here, you have to find a place to rent; there are not that much places to rent; you have to find a locations, they are not united like back in home, where everybody knows what it is. Everybody take parts for reasons. So we are more united back home as a whole because they know that is the way it is. But here, we have to get up to go to work the next day. But back home, we don’t have to go to work next day, because this is what we do.

Kate, a recent immigrant from Barbados, who grew up with the Crop Over, a celebration of the end of sugarcane harvest on her island, but who is not quite familiar with the Brooklyn Carnival yet, indicated similar sentiments to those of Aaron:

… [People] here party, but to me back home is nicer and more organized and it has more spirit than here maybe because here more different nationality, then we have no respect to visitors who just come and jump, because it is something new for them but back home it is more organized and people are more involved, it is different feeling than here.

Besides hand-crafted costumes, the most important ritual artifacts of the carnival are food and music. Informants, both participants and spectators, in general indicated a dilemma between authenticity and hybridization of the two items which quintessentially serve to define the consumer’s self identity in the social and cultural groups. Food, for instance, is “more than a means of nourishment and sustenance; it is also a key cultural expression” (Peñaloza 1994, 42). As a metaphor for culture, food serves as a statement about society, issues, class, or other things that are considered significant in the culture. (Farb and Armelagos 1980). Plenty of Caribbean foods sold by vendors are authentic festival foods that can be cooked only outdoors. Several informants mentioned roasted corn and grilled chicken, for instance, which can not be roasted or grilled at home but only baked in the oven; “foods like this prepared outdoor give natural flavors.” When they are sold on Eastern Parkway, however, some elements of the local culture slip onto the plate. Diminished authenticity is considered unavoidable and consumers were willing to compromise and accommodate. On the other hand, the intrusion of the American popular junk food into the carnivalscape stirred not only annoyance and disappointment but some anger. Grease trucks stuffed with hotdogs, French fries, pretzels, and gelato ice cream with artificial colors and flavors stood discreetly at intersections of large streets, perhaps a yard away from Eastern Parkway.

Music is another rudiment of the Carnival. Born in Trinidad, calypso, the improvisational satirical folksong, used to be the most popular music for mas bands at Caribbean carnivals in both Trinidad and elsewhere. In recent years, however, soca, a mixture of soul and calypso, has gained wider popularity. Originating in Trinidad in the 1970s, its rhythms are basically Latin and its lyrics have roots in West African traditions of praise, ridicule, and commentary on public events similar to calypso. Jamaican reggae music and Haitian kompa compete against the Trinidadian in the Parade. In addition, live performances of steel pans and bongo drums constitute the music apropos of the Carnival. All these types of music are something beyond background music. The performing of music and the digesting it as the audience together create the whole musical experience that calls up deep responses beyond the enjoyment of merely fascinating noise. This process has ritual significance. As Kivy contends (1993, 27), “participation in the musical experience has the effect, through these deep connections, of bringing people together: It has a culturally cohesive effect.” Consumer research on the cultural meaning of music from different genres indicates that music is important to any level of culture (such as age and ethnic subcultures) to define itself and to determine group status (Blair and Hatala 1992; Schroeder and Borgerson 1999; Hogg and Banister 2000). However, in recent years, there have been intrusions of the “Other” music, such as hip-hop and rap music.

The concept of Americanization immediately provoked two negative words: limits and violence. Aaron, in discussing the real carnival in Trinidad, explained about “the real thing”: “We don’t have no limits. Over here, we have limits and restrictions. Restrictions is like we can’t do this, we can’t do certain things that we can do back home.” For example, “here you can’t walk and drink on the street.” The limits were imposed when Rudy Giuliani became the mayor of the New York City, and they changed part of the ritual script of this Carnival:

They have parties to raise funds for masqueraders. That’s parties are for. So, back then, people used to have parties illegally. But then, Giuliani and his people came in and shut all them down.

There used to be parties every Friday for several months before the actual Carnival. They were so big, so big that police had to come to clear the traffic on Flatbush Avenue. No cars, no buses can come down. It was so much people every Friday night. That went on for two to three years. Then, Giuliani became a mayor, he barred everything. He killed some of our spirit. But there are still some people who are not gonna give up, like me, and you see those who are here. We fight, because we want to pass this down to our younger generation.

Violence is another facet of what the informants considered Americanization that is frequently and intensely discussed by informants. Violence, such as gunfire and Carnival killing, has erupted in the crowd of thousands in the past, striking those climbing aboard a float or just walking around the block. An altercation might break out and violence would ensue. While it happens everywhere, here in Brooklyn and in Trinidad, “It’s disgusting,” said one male, comparing its magnitude, and continuing that “in New York very obvious it’s overwhelming, it’s very, very overwhelming. They have no respect for the police; police have no respect for them. As soon as you talk to them, they are ready to shoot you. We have violence back home [Trinidad], but here we have more.”

There is a question about uniqueness of violence as American. Appadurai (1996, 139) contends “the contemporary world is filled with examples of ethnic consciousness that are closely linked to nationalism and violence.” While these Americanized aspects of the Parade (i.e., violence and restrictions) affected the authenticity of the Carnival and Parade, younger West Indians, particularly those who grew up in the U.S., consider them legitimate and unavoidable. These young informants who were descendants of West Indians grew up in New York City while the City was being cleaned up to become a safe, attractive, and hyperreal tourism
destination. They consume violence in media and through games. In their minds, violence is the object of spectacle and harmless experience that exist only in the simulated world. The different perspectives regarding violence by generations, gender, and ideology are another evidence for the polysemous nature of authenticities and hybridizations within a given ethnic group of consumers.

The meanings of “Bacchanal”

**Ritual as Therapy.** The opposite word to express the spirit of the Carnival and Parade culture is “bacchanal”: Having a good, party time. In describing the most memorable episodes from the Carnival, young male informants almost always confessed the seeing, meeting, dancing with women was exciting, sometimes ethereal, experience; evanescent as they may be, sexually oriented, yet non-erotic, experiences are a panacea for the loathsome subjugation to the mundane. Another driving force of “bacchanal” is reactance to hardships of daily life, and socioeconomically stressful, if not depressing, living conditions in the large metropolis. Under such circumstances, releasing energy and entrancing the self is necessary to maintain sanity. Especially with costumes and masks, masqueraders’ physical appearances are altered, and the psychic personality is transformed into the other, ideal self or subconscious, hidden, split self. Aaron enthusiastically explained the cathartic aspect of the Carnival:

Carnival is one of the happiest things that we can bring to our self; it means a lot to me. As a matter of fact, in year 2000, I was the king of the band which is very big, it’s a big, big thing. That means you won the king. You won the position that can’t be taken away from me. So, it’s excitement, happiness, and joy. After working every day and doing all the negativity, this is the day that you get to release every thing. That’s basically what it is.

These narratives of the informants suggested the therapeutic effect of the Carnival ritual. It provides the consumer with agency and amplitude. The role inversion and “deep play” allow participants to break away from everyday life (Turner 1969; Geertz 1973). Although its periodicities are not cosmological, the recurrence of the ritual ascertains the sustenance of the community, the heritage, and the self. Moreover, the Carnival takes place in the postmodern utopia, where participants perceptually experience spatiotemporal displacement, create playspace, and perform artscape (Maclaran and Brown 2005) although it is not in the confined marketplace. As such, it is the “milieu of ‘community, freedom, equality and abundance,’ where the normal order of everyday life can be reversed, albeit temporarily, and where the imagination can run riot” (Bakhtin cited in Maclaran and Brown 2005, 312).

**Ritual as Resistance.** The transformation and liberation of the self does not always occur in the vacuum of social context. As with any big drunken orgiastic party, or affectual tribes discussed by Maffesoli (1996), “bacchanal” can invite problems and dangers. Aside from the physical violence already discussed, there are conceptual problems about the meanings of the Carnival. There is a blurred boundary to delineate the realm of the festive event. Then, the Parade becomes a site of political discourse and proclamation based on people’s collective historical memory. In other words, for some, the Carnival is not merely a bacchanal but a symposium for philosophical inquiry and political contestation.

One object that is venerated by West Indian participants and spectators is their national flag. With their national flag, the extended self par excellence, they expressed their renewed national pride (Nunley and Bettelheim 1988). On Eastern Parkway, a large number of vendors sell national flags of each Island nation and other souvenir items (such as key chains, T-shirts, accessories) that use the colors of those flags. It is a sacred ritual artifact for those spectators who make an annual pilgrimage to the Parade. For example, Edmund, a young immigrant from Haiti said, “When I go there I design the whole thing like the Haitian flag” in discussing his Parade attire. He wears the flag on the day of the Parade because he wants to “simulate freedom” as his ancestors did; he feels their spirit is in him. Daniel, a second generation Haitian-American, readily agreed with his classmate, claiming, “For me I feel like the celebration of the freedom, and feel what my ancestors have fought for.” Not only does it help sustain the self identity, but its succession from one generation to the next means a great deal to these West Indian consumers. In this regard, the Carnival and the obsession with the national flag can be interpreted as the outcome of their acculturation process (Peñaloza 1994) while it mirrors the commodification of the culture (Oswald 1997). Nationality, one of the personal identifying characteristics and attributes, to a significant extent defines the self. At the same time, what one wears is an explicit statement of self concept. Thus, wearing the national flag at the Carnival and Parade may be considered the extreme manifestation of the self extended into possessions simultaneously at multiple levels (Belk 1988). Therefore, West Indian consumers, individually and collectively, resist submerging their West Indian identities and assimilating into the American culture, which is considered temporal and changing and which threatens the spiritual resort anchored to the traditional West Indian one.

**The Importance of Being Earnest and Playful**

Unlike adult Halloween parties (Belk 1994) and Lesbian and Gay Pride Day Parade (Kates and Belk 2001), the West Indian American Day Carnival and Parade is not merely a ritual of excess, extremes, exaggeration, debauchery, and licentiousness. Le mot juste here is perhaps “playful,” but it goes beyond such manifest behavior as humor, joking, and comedy. The playful behavior is not a consequence or reversal of repressed hostility, anger; on the contrary, it is a manifestation of the most earnest desire to maintain sanity and sustain human bonds. In the same way that Turner (1988, 124) contested that “the way people play perhaps is more profoundly revealing of a culture than how they work, giving access to their ‘heart values,’” this Carnival is a sacred tradition for many West Indian consumers through which participants and spectators introspect reflexively, relating their lives to the values handed down from one generation to the next.

Regardless of their stage of acculturization to their new world, dramaturgical interactions through playful behavior to shape and reshape the consumer identities are consequential for both individuals and the community at large. Beyond the needs of individual consumers, such symbolic interactions define the fuzzy perimeter of communities in today’s multiethnic and multicultural metropolis (Goffman 1959; Maffesoli 1996). In an aggregate sense, the Carnival rituals, which are both hedonic and polemical, define, at least in their very truth, the social salience of the West Indian consumers and their communities. It loudly speaks about them. In this regard, being earnest and playful is not antithetical but properties that must coexist and manifest in their bacchanalian ritual.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The present study examined the meanings of the creolized consumer ritual, the West Indian American Day Carnival and Parade that takes place in Brooklyn on Labor Day in September. Although the carnival has long since lost its original religious meaning, the ritual process of creating the carnival is sacred to masqueraders. Likewise, in order to watch the carnival events and the Parade, spectators make the annual pilgrimage to Brooklyn. It
is a kaleidoscope of color and sound, joy and excitement, performance and play, consumption objects and experiences, produced and consumed interdependently, creating abundant consumption meanings. The paper discussed five interpretive findings: production and consumption of the carnival as the ritual process; multiculturalism and ethnocentrism; authenticity and hybridization; the meanings of “Bacchanal”; and the importance of being earnest and playful in consuming the Carnival and Parade ritual.

The Carnival is bone and blood of the local West Indian consumers. Music flows in their veins. Rhythms of the road march vibrate in their hearts. As they jump up in the air, laughter and breathing of urban maenads and satyrs reverberate in the sky. The entire mass pulsates with excitement. Madness is everywhere. As they laugh harder, however, their laughter begins to sound as if they are crying. On the float, paraphrasing Stevie Smith, are they waving or drowning? The seriousness of their play is a reflection of their desperate desire and firm determination for better living and their resistance to nothingness. Being earnest and playful in consuming the Carnival and Parade ritual.

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The Computer as ‘Middle Agent’: Negotiating the Meanings of Marriage on a Sikh Online Dating Site

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we consider how virtual marketspaces are reshaping socio-cultural contexts by exploring how intergenerational meanings and expectations of marriage are being negotiated through consumption of an online dating site, Shaadi.com, a site that is used by the Sikh community to find potential life partners. First, the paper discusses relevant background literature on computer-mediated communications and online dating before giving an overview of Shaadi.com in relation to traditional Sikh marriage rituals. Then it describes our interpretivist approach which used participant observation combined with online and offline interviews. The findings show that key socio-cultural tensions around the question of Sikh courtship are being negotiated through the use of this medium. The paper concludes with a discussion of the role of the computer as ‘middle agent’, a role that is taken traditionally by a family friend in arranged Sikh marriages.

INTRODUCTION

Many communities of users flourish on the Internet, bringing people together that could not otherwise have connected across what are often extremely diverse and dispersed locations (Jones 1999). Interactive modes of computer mediated communication (CMC), such as bulletin boards, discussions lists and chatrooms, have facilitated the growth of many online communities that are devoted to particular product classes or brands. Online communities have thus gained increasing recognition in consumer research, both as a methodological tool to gather consumption-related information (Kozinets 2002) and as a site of enquiry in themselves for phenomena such as brand communities, consumer resistance and subcultures of consumption (Cova 2002 ; Kozinets 1997; Muniz and Schau 2006). Whilst these studies have produced many important insights for consumer researchers, the context of CMC and how the consumption of this medium permeates other facets of consumers’ lives has generally not been the research focus. Yet, sociologists such as Slevin (2000) noted radical change in the way in which individuals within the virtual environment interpret and respond to the social world. In this paper we consider how virtual marketspaces are reshaping socio-cultural contexts by exploring how intergenerational meanings and expectations of marriage are being negotiated through consumption of an online dating site, Shaadi.com, a site that is used by the Sikh community to find potential life partners.

LITERATURE OVERVIEW

Increasingly it is being recognised that it is wrong to dichotomise the virtual and real worlds and that Internet users do not necessarily make such distinctions or compartmentalise aspects of their lives in this way (Argle and Shields 1996; Parks and Floyd 1996; Miller and Slater 1998). To this end, Jones (1999) suggests that there has not been sufficient research about the connections between life online and its meaning in relation to life offline. In this respect, one particularly interesting trend that bridges the two worlds of the virtual and the real is online dating, a phenomenon which has increased dramatically in recent years. Online dating occurs whenever people use the online environment as a starting point to establish romantic relationships that then move into the offline environment.

One important socio-cultural function of these sites is their emergence as a response to contemporary transition in courtship. There are increasing number of single adults with very little time to date or meet potential partners and this has facilitated the development and expansion of relatively novel modes of establishing intimate relationship (Woll and Young 1989). The use of information technology to find and meet a new partner can be traced back to the mid 1960s when an attempt was made to match individuals by comparing data from questionnaires using a computer in the United States. Promoted as ‘scientific’ matching of people, the use of the computer gained rapid popularity (Hardy 2002). It is from this background that the current proliferation of online dating sites has evolved. Over 8 million people in the UK alone now use these dating sites (Chat 2000).

From a consumer behaviour point of view, the consumption of these sites is a particularly interesting phenomenon. As with traditional dating agencies, individuals self-market through profiles that are designed to attract potential partners. Internet dating agencies, however, facilitate social interaction in a way that their offline counterparts do not. This is through email, chat rooms and one-to-one synchronous communications prior to developing any relationship(s) offline. Because it is a medium that enables consumers to explore different personae and even multiple identities, there is no doubt that the Internet encourages fantasy consumption. In this sense it can also be a very liberating, playful space for consumers, a space where they can construct the ‘myself-that-could-be’ (Belk 1996). Not everyone shares this opinion, however, and Bauman (2003) highlights three indicators of the commodified process that he sees as inherent in online dating:

1) It is an environment that encourages multiple, and often, brief ‘connections’.
2) Marketplace values are evident both in the way users market themselves, and in terms of how they look through profiles, and photos to identify an ‘evoked set’ of potential partners.
3) It may encourage restless and disacquiring behaviour on the part of consumers, as also identified by Campbell (1987) in relation to the romantic ethic in contemporary consumption.

However Bauman’s dichotomous view of offline/online relationships has been accused of being simplistic. Previous work (Maclaran et al. 2006) shows that this medium is being used very satisfactorily to establish relationships that can move into the offline world. Their findings suggest that the online environment facilitates a more protracted communication and flirtation stage than in the offline environment, and that people often spend longer getting to know each other mentally, as opposed to physically.

Noted in the above brief review are some contrasting functions of online dating sites: on the one hand, as facilitators of social
interaction (Hardey, 2002), and their potential as romantic playspaces, (Belk, 1996); and, on the other, their role in the commodification of romance (Bauman, 2003), where contemporary users of such sites self-market themselves. However, online dating is a phenomenon that arguably represents more than each of these perceptions. In particular, past characterizations and past studies have failed, a) to acknowledge how the two environments (online and offline) complement each other in a defined social community context; and b) to seriously consider the sociocultural processes whereby relationships make the transition from one environment to the other. This study of Shadi.com seeks to explore both of these elements of a virtual dating service within the wider context of contemporary offline Sikh dating rituals.

THE RESEARCH SITE

Shadi.com was founded in 1997 with the explicit aim of providing Indians around the world with a superior matchmaking service. They claim to have over 5 million members worldwide and over 500,000 success stories. It aims to give customers control over the selection process with easy functions that allow members to identify, filter and contact potential partners.

Shadi.com is widely known within the Sikh community through both word-of-mouth and advertising on the Indian TV channels. It has gained acceptance amongst both parents and children as a way to find a marriage partner. Part of this acceptance is due to the fact that Sikh marriages are very much a family affair, with a long tradition of parents introducing potential partners to their children. Indeed, if a child reaches marriageable age and is not then married fairly swiftly, the parents actually feel they have failed in some way and that they have not properly fulfilled their role as a parent.

Arranged marriages are thus still commonplace, although there are many tensions between parents and their more westernised children. When a child reaches marriageable age, parents tell family and friends who then start to look and suggest potential candidates. Matching income, education, religious affiliation, ethnic background and caste are all extremely important. When a potential candidate is put forward, the two families involved usually request photos and, if these are acceptable to both sides, the couple will meet up in the presence of a middle person, often termed the ‘middle agent’, who presides over the occasion and acts as go-between for developing the relationship, or not. Often the couple will be required to make a decision with only one or two meetings, after which a wedding will be arranged if they have decided in the affirmative.

There is tremendous pressure on young Sikhs to go through these processes as otherwise they can be accused of bringing shame on the family. Shadi.com is frequently regarded by Sikh parents as an efficient way to replace the role of the middle person. The fact that multiple potential partners can be screened, with extensive background information readily available, makes the site very attractive to them and they see it as assisting them in their parental duties. Although some young Sikh adults take the initiative to join the site, many are there because their parents have encouraged them.

RESEARCH METHODS

The overall approach was interpretivist, and data collection followed a multi-method design that combined netnography (Kozinets, 2002) with offline semi-structured interviews. Consistent with a netnographic research approach which requires an immersive combination of participation and observation, one of the authors of this study, herself a third generation British Sikh, participated in the Shadi.com community (see Kozinets, 1997, 2002; Maclaran and Catterall, 2001). In keeping with recommended research ethics for online research (Sharf 1999) and the ESOMAR code of conduct, she announced her presence prior to any direct interaction and guaranteed to protect the anonymity of all informants. The netnography resulted in fieldnotes that documented interactions between members on the site and the researcher’s own thoughts and feelings about the processes taking place. Table 1 gives further details of the stages of the research and various methods used.

This study was carried out longitudinally over a period of two and a half years. The study adopted a theoretical sampling approach which involves continually comparing and contrasting the data being collected and seeking informants on the basis of the emergent constructs. For example, having talked online to several young Sikh users, in-depth interviews were conducted offline with young adults in the British Sikh community to explore in detail their ‘lived’ experience of using the site, their perceptions of its role in their lives, and their contemporary interpretation of Sikh courtship. In addition, the researchers felt it was important to undertake in-depth interviews with Sikh parents for comparative purposes to investigate their perceptions of the site, how it contrasted with their own courtship experiences, and the themes of cultural and intergenerational tensions that were emerging.

The data was collected in several phases due to the nature of this sampling method. The data collection, analysis and interpretation progressed in an iterative and interrelated manner between the online and offline environments, following the principles for the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data as recommended by Spiggle (1994) and others (Strauss and Corbin 1990; Arnould and Wallendorf 1994).

All the interviews were conducted with informants from the British Sikh community. The first Sikh families (i.e. first and second generation) came to Britain in the 1950s from India. The main informants for this current research are the children of the second generation of Sikhs that arrived. This third generation have all been born in Britain and raised as British Sikhs.

Our core research question for the study was how is consumption of the Shaadi.com website helping to reshape the socio-cultural context of its Sikh users? Three key themes emerged in answer to this question, namely: 1) facilitating changing boy/girl courtship expectations; 2) creating a space for parent/child negotiations; and 3) bridging east/west cultural divisions. We now go on to explore each of these in more detail, illustrating them with excerpts from our informant interviews.

FINDINGS

Facilitating Changing Boy/Girl Courtship Expectations

As already documented, the boy meets girl situation within the Sikh culture has long been a process associated with stress, pressure and a lack of options; a process governed by parents where young Sikhs have had little say in the decisions being made. This research found much evidence of change, particularly in relation to the increasing expectations of young Sikhs to have their own autonomy in relationships with members of the opposite sex. Most of our informants believed that they could find a ‘soulmate’, a person ideal for them and not just a marriage partner in the traditional sense. Many frequently described their quest for romantic love. In the following quote from Jatinder we see this clearly expressed:

My intention was to find someone that I could get to know and then eventually marry. And it sounds easy but it really isn’t
The Computer as ‘Middle Agent’: Negotiating the Meanings of Marriage on a Sikh Online Dating Site

EASY AT ALL, IN FACT IT’S REALLY HARD WORK. SEE, I JUST WANTED TO FIND MY AISHWARIYA RAI [Bollywood heroine] I SUPPOSE AND I KNOW THAT SOUNDS SAD AND THAT I’M NOT EXACTLY VIVEK OBEROI [Bollywood hero] BUT SHE IS MY IDEAL WOMAN OR MY BOLLYWOOD HEROINE, IF YOU LIKE, THAT I WANTED TO FIND FOR ME. THE THING IS I THOUGHT I JUST WANTED TO HAVE MY OWN SPACE TO FIND A GIRL THAT WAS PERFECT, OR IDEAL FOR ME. (JATINDER, SIKH MALE)


OUR INFORMANTS OFTEN HIGHLIGHTED THEIR WISH TO SEE THE SIKH APPROACH TO MARRIAGE MODERNISED, EXPRESSING THEIR DISSATISFACTION WITH THE IDEALS AND EXPECTATIONS OF TRADITIONALLY ARRANGED MARRIAGES. IN ORDER TO BE HAPPY, THEY BELIEVE THEY NEED TO EXPERIENCE EMOTION SUCH AS LOVE, AN EMOTION THAT PREVIOUS GENERATIONS DID NOT REQUIRE OR ANTICIPATE WITHIN THEIR FORMALLY ARRANGED MARRIAGES. INDEED, ONE FREQUENT SAYING, RE-ITERATED THROUGHOUT PARENTAL INTERVIEWS, WAS THAT ‘LOVE COMES AFTER MARRIAGE’. THIS WAS SEEN AS A SOMEWHAT HEARTLESS AND VERY FUNCTIONAL APPROACH BY THEIR CHILDREN AS THE FOLLOWING QUOTE FROM SARBJIT ILLUSTRATES:

THEY’RE [THE PARENTS] VERY CLINICAL ABOUT MARRIAGE, IT’S ALL STATISTICAL TO THEM. SHE HAS TO BE SIKH, THE SAME CASTE, TALL, EDUCATED, PREFERABLY A DOCTOR, HOSPITABLE FOR ALL THE GUESTS THAT COME OVER TO THE HOUSE, GOOD FAMILY BACKGROUND, AND THE LIST GOES ON AND ON. THE THING IS I DO AGREE WITH THEM, BUT FOR ME MARRIAGE IS FOR LIFE AND IT’S ABOUT HOW I FEEL ABOUT THAT PERSON. IT’S VERY EMOTIONAL AND PERSONAL FOR ME. (SARBJIT, SIKH MALE)

WITH ITS PREDISPOSITION TO ENCOURAGE FANTASISING (MACLARAN ET AL. 2006), THE ONLINE DATING ENVIRONMENT FUELS THESE EXPECTATIONS OF LOVE AND ROMANCE. WHEN PEOPLE MEET ONLINE THEY FREQUENTLY HAVE MANY CONVERSATIONS BY EMAIL AND TELEPHONE PRIOR TO MEETING IN THE OFFLINE ENVIRONMENT. THIS, CONSIDERABLE FANTASIES MAY BUILD UP, PARTICULARLY TO DO WITH EACH OTHER’S PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES. THIS CREATION OF ROMANTIC ILLUSIONS CAN PRODUCE AN EMOTIONAL ROLLER-COASTER RIDE WHICH ULTIMATELY MAY LEAD TO DISAPPOINTMENT:

I THINK BECAUSE EVERYTHING IS DONE ONLINE IT ALLOWS YOU TO DRIFT INTO THIS FANTASY LAND THAT EVERYTHING WILL BE PERFECT LIKE IN A HINDI FILM. BUT IT DOESN’T ALWAYS WORK LIKE THAT. BECAUSE WE BUILD UP THESE GREAT EXPECTATIONS AND SHE WILL DO EXACTLY THE SAME, AND WHEN WE MEET WE EXPECT THIS GREAT MOMENT WHERE WE FIRST MEET AND SEE EACH OTHER. BUT HOW LIKELY IS IT THAT IT WILL BE LIKE THAT? WE SET OURSELVES UP FOR DISAPPOINTMENT, BY HAVING THESE UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS. (JATINDER, SIKH MALE)

DESPITE THE FACT THAT SHAADI.COM MAY ENCOURAGE IMPOSSIBLE IMAGININGS, HOWEVER, THE VERY FACT THAT THESE YOUNG SIKHS ARE THINKING OF ROMANCE AT ALL REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT CULTURAL CHANGE IN THEIR EXPECTATIONS. SIGNIFICANTLY ALSO, SHAADI.COM ENCOURAGES A COURTSHIP PROCESS THAT IS MUCH LESS FORMAL THAN PREVIOUSLY WAS THE CASE, A PROCESS THAT IS LONGER DRAWN OUT AND INCORPORATES BOTH DATING AND FLIRTING, TWO ELEMENTS THAT DID NOT COME INTO PREVIOUS, TRADITIONAL SIKH COURTSHIP EXPERIENCES:

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<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Research Phase</th>
<th>Research Methods</th>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 04– Mar 05</td>
<td>Exploratory Phase</td>
<td>- observations of shaadi.com</td>
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<td>- Observation of competitors’ websites</td>
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<td>April 05– June 06</td>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>- Online participant observation</td>
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<td>- Online Interviews (8)</td>
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<td>- Offline interviews (8)</td>
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<td>- Parental in-depth interviews (4)</td>
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<td>July 06– December</td>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>- Online participant observation</td>
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<td>Development of core</td>
<td>- offline observations</td>
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<td>- Online interviews (7)</td>
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<td>- Parental interviews (6)</td>
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TABLE 1
Overview of the Research

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When I meet a girl I suppose the first thing I judge is how things are between us and whether it feels right, whether I’m attracted to her. But then I would kind of mentally compare the stuff that she has told me online to know how she is in real life. I would expect her to behave in a certain way and be sensible, but at the same time I think it’s nice to have that little bit of flirting. (Sarbjit, Sikh male)

Creating a Space for Parent/Child Negotiations

Sikh culture, customs and traditions originate from India. When the first two generations of Sikhs migrated to Britain they resisted complete acculturation into their new country of residence and sought to maintain their Sikh identity. However the third generation of Sikhs in Britain were expected to learn and assimilate two cultures simultaneously. So, as we have just seen in the previous section, although they belong to the same Sikh culture and family, there are major intergenerational differences that exist, especially when it comes to the issue of marriage. Issues such as how a boy and girl should meet, together with the characteristics of marriage. It is also a battle of how I do it. (Harjit, Sikh Female)

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It’s a strain all the time because you’re having to argue your way through things and getting them to see your kind of things. And sometimes, their way of thinking is, you just think, god it’s just so old school and they’re making their own lives miserable because of the way they think. And you just think, god if they could lose that mentality, they’d be a lot happier too. (Harjit, Sikh female)

Similarly, for Sarbjit too, this is a major conflict with his parents over each other’s expectations of marriage. It is also a battle over who controls the process, his mother or himself:

They definitely think arranged marriage is the way I should get married and I think that’s because that is the only way they have ever known, because it’s also the only I have ever known until I watched some of my friends get married and I realised that different does not mean it’s bad. Sometimes it causes so many arguments because I’m adamant that I do things my way, and my mum is adamant things are done her way. Sometimes I feel so torn about what I should do, but I have to be true to myself as well. (Sarbjit, Sikh Male)

Shaadi.com, being a space that is acceptable to both sides, becomes a way to resolve some of these tensions. As we have just seen, for the younger generation of Sikhs, Shaadi.com gives them an independent voice and freedom to romance, love and date. For parents, the site allows their children to seek matches in terms of income, education, caste and so forth, much like the choice criteria used for an arranged match. The website is a means to an end and the most important thing is the outcome, which is to have their child married and to have fulfilled their obligations as a parent:

It’s like I was saying, my parents and myself don’t actually argue about how I should marry or anything, but I think my parents have their different ideals, but essentially no one cares as long as I get married. (Harjit, Sikh female)

This apparent not caring on the part of her parents is, of course, dependent on her eventually marrying another Sikh. Parents are forced to accept that, as British Sikhs, their children have a more limited range of marriageable partners in their day-to-day family and social networks than if they lived in India. Therefore the opportunity to access a larger number of suitable partners afforded by the website means that it gains respectability with Sikh parents as a means of achieving their desired outcome of a good marriage for their child. In many ways it is assisting them in their role of being a good parent and finding an appropriate match for their child. In a similar way to their children, they too are adapting their ideals as they witness the changing attitudes of the younger generation and as they seek to maintain good relationships with their children. Thus, in general, it seems that as long as the children seek parental approval and include them in their decisions over potential partners, then everything they do to this end is acceptable:

With my parents I think they have their ideals of how they would like me to get married and the kind of person they would like me to marry, but they also acknowledge that it’s really hard to find people for me to marry. As a result of that they’re a lot more flexible. My mum is always telling me to find someone to marry myself, but make sure I’m sensible about how I do it. (Harjit, Sikh Female)

Just as their parents strive to maintain good relationships with their children, so too do young Sikhs try to please their parents. Those we interviewed were reluctant to take any action with regards to marriage without parental approval. This is because honour and obedience for one’s parents is a deeply rooted aspect of Sikh custom. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their children understand and fulfil Sikh cultural expectations. If children deviate from expected cultural norms this reflects negatively on the whole family, but especially on the parents. It is therefore the responsibility of children to ensure that they represent their parents well, and avoid bringing shame on them.

This is where Shaadi.com represents a middle ground where they can negotiate their respective needs. Several informants described how their parents, particularly their mother, would take a great interest in their activities on the website. In return, they would often consult their parents about potential partners they had viewed. Some mothers would frequently sit with their children at the computer, scrolling through potential partners on the website so that they can both assess them. Searching together in this way becomes a way to unite parent and their child during an activity that is very important for them both, whilst at the same time allowing them access to a deeper understanding of each other’s needs. A significant aspect of this interaction facilitated by the website is that the selection process gives control to the young adult rather than the parent. It is in this way that they can begin to re-negotiate their differing ideas of love and marriage on a more equal basis.

Bridging East/West Cultural Divisions

Many tensions that arise between Sikh parents and children are less a conflict over tradition, and more a clash between eastern versus western cultural values. This clash was referred to constantly throughout the interviews with both parents and children. Third generation Sikhs have been born and bred in Britain but their parents and grandparents were not. Thus, each generation is at a different stage of acculturation (Peñaloza 1994) and this produces much intergenerational conflict and lack of understanding.

Many of the younger generation informants feel that they face a cultural struggle that impacts deeply on their sense of identity. Like Peñaloza’s ‘border consumers’, they acknowledge the pulls of both British and Sikh cultures. Yet, they often feel as though they do not belong properly to either as they constantly try to reconcile the opposing cultural influences that they experience. Part of the
recurrernt problem for them is that parents and grandparents often think that younger Sikhs are too westernised, as the following quote from Sabeena highlights:

But in some ways I do clash with my parents, or my grandparents, because I have my own opinions which they think are too westernized, or they have their ideas of how things should be done, or how I should behave. Like, if I laugh too much at Indian functions, my gran will tell me off and say it doesn’t look nice, whereas I think ‘if I’m happy then let me be happy!’’ (Sabeena, Sikh Female)

For the older generations, the western influence on their young is seen as a major threat to their Sikh identity. As we see in the quote above, they pass these anxieties on to younger Sikhs in an attempt to make them retain their cultural roots. This, then, has a significant emotional impact on their children (or grandchildren) who feel torn between different value systems. We see this clearly as Jatinder discusses his feelings:

Well I’m a bit torn, to be honest with you, because, while I do agree with them in that we shouldn’t go on loads of dates or have endless girlfriends, at the same time I think we should have the opportunity to date someone and see what they are like, and get to know them if we are going to spend the rest of our lives with them. But it comes back down to the issue of cultural conflict doesn’t it? Because Indian culture dictates that we should have an arranged marriage, but the western world in which we live encourages us to what suits us and makes us happy. So, again, I’m damned if I do, and damned if don’t. (Jatinder, Sikh Male)

As we can see in the above quote from Jatinder, he feels caught between the opposing cultural values of East and West, between what is perceived as right and wrong, in terms of courtship, by each culture. Thus for young Sikhs, such as Jatinder, the continual struggle of not feeling totally Indian or totally British can generate an identity conflict that results in an overall sense of alienation.

The Sikh marriage process throws these tensions into high relief, encouraging what Giddens (1991) describes as ‘the reflexive self’, as young Sikhs start to question aspects of themselves in relation to the demands that are suddenly been imposed on them. Throughout the interview there was a recurrent narrative of comparing and contrasting the British culture they live in with the Indian culture of their parents and grandparents:

I think being within the British culture, kind of mixing in with that, I think it’s kind of opened my eyes up a lot more, like the Indian culture is very narrow minded, it’s very much, you must be like this, you must be like that and anything outside of that is wrong. And the western culture is almost opposite to Indian. (Jatinder, Sikh Male)

It seems that they weigh the demands made on them by each culture, especially their expectations versus those of their parents, and try to achieve a compromise between the two cultures, performing a type of balancing act. For example Harjit described it as ‘a case of balancing what’s required or expected of you from the western world versus your family from the eastern world’; and Sabeena confided that ‘I have to find a way to balance it out but that’s hard as well’.

Shaadi.com offers them a supportive community of other like-minded peers who can relate to the conflicts that they are experiencing over the question of whether they are Sikh, Indian or British. Yet it is also a community that receives the approval of their parents. In this respect computer technology is assisting them as they try to find a balance between the two cultural forces. Although it is a western technology, by making a website such as Shaadi.com available that brings members of the Sikh community together, it is also assisting them to embed themselves more strongly in eastern culture. It is in this sense that the website acts as a bridge between East and West cultural divisions.

DISCUSSION

The findings show clearly the role of Shaadi.com as a middle ground where a younger generation of Sikhs can seek a compromise between the opposing worlds in which they find themselves. The site provides a liminal zone, a space between transitions (Schouten 1991) where they can negotiate their roles as mature Sikh adults. Their parents condone their use of such a site because for them it seems to be a logical extension of the role of the middle person, or ‘middle agent’, in the traditional Sikh marriage process. Like the middle agent, the website acts as a go-between to get suitably matched couples together and to allow them to develop their relationship. However the website also goes beyond this role by also acting as a catalyst for change through encouraging new rituals to emerge (i.e. dating and flirting) and giving more control over choice of partner to the parties involved and not their parents.

The interaction that takes place on the site between prospective partners and the accompanying discussions with their parents leads to an emerging Sikh narrative of modern courtship. Two key features of narrative highlighted by Elliott (2005) are: a) the encouragement of moments of recognition (or reflection) by narrators; and b) a sense of pointedness (the concept that within narrative you arrive at key focal points of meaning as the narrative unfolds). As these young people are using the website and sharing their experiences with friends, findings show that they are reaching moments of recognition in their own sense of understanding of Sikh courtship. In turn, the sense of pointedness emerges in the interactions between parents and children as they arrive at a shared meaning (a focal understanding) around the role and expectations of young Sikh adults in relation to contemporary courtship. The Sikh dating site is a catalyst for this emerging intergenerational narrative: at the same time, its processes are a material part of it.

Thus, arguably, in contrast to past studies, the consumption of online dating sites represents much more than a contemporary use of information technology for better social interaction (Hardey, 2002); or reductionist marketplace commodity thinking (Bauman, 2003); and also more than a valuable fantasy playspace (Belk, 1996). In this case, the ‘lived’ world of the virtual marketplace is making a fundamental contribution to both continuing and new socio-cultural structuring of consumer lives.

In a wider sense, that may be applicable to other contexts, the study reinforces Slevin’s (2000) view that the virtual environment engenders changes in the way individuals interpret and respond to the social world. Overall the website brings the online and offline worlds together in ways that enable socio-cultural tensions to be made more explicit and ultimately to work towards their resolution. As such it is very much an extension of its users offline social interactions (McLuhan 1994), rather than being completely separate. Instead of being a fantasy world apart, the effects of CMC enable consumers to be grounded ‘more firmly within their existing material communities and circumstances’ (Jones 2002, p.1).

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An Empirical Examination of the Extended Model of Goal-Directed Behaviour: Assessing the Role of Behavioural Desire
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INTRODUCTION

The Extended Model of Goal-directed Behavior (EMGB: Perugini, and Conner 2000) is the latest model developed to gain a better understanding of cognitive and affective decision making processes. This model extends the well known Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB; Ajzen 1991) and the previous Model of Goal-directed Behavior (MGB; Perugini and Bagozzi 2001) by focusing on explaining behavioral volition and linking volitions to goals. The model builds on three areas neglected in the TPB, namely, affect, motivation and habit. A limited number of studies have employed either the MGB or its extended variant, these studies being in the areas of body weight regulation, studying effort, regulation of hypertension, learning software and eating in a fast food restaurant (Bagozzi and Lee 2000; Leone, Perugini, and Ercolani 2004; Perugini and Bagozzi 2001; Taylor, Bagozzi, and Gaither 2005). Overall the findings of these studies have concluded favorably on the MGB and the EMGB, indicating that these models deliver superior performance when compared to the TPB (Perugini and Conner 2000).

In recognizing the significance of tobacco consumption as a key public health concern, this study focuses on the popular, government endorsed method of smoking cessation through the use of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT). In the UK, 114,000 deaths were attributable to tobacco consumption in 2002 (ASH, 2004). Nevertheless, Lader and Goddard (2003) report that in 2002, 14.3 million adults in the UK were regular smokers with 78% of them having tried to quit. Regarding the efficacy of the use of NRT, studies (Hughes et al., 2003; Lancaster et al., 2000; Stead and Lancaster, 2003; Silagy and Stead, 2003; Silagy et al., 2003) have shown that NRT and other behavioural programmes can substantially improve the chances of sustained long-term smoking cessation. To address this public health concern, the UK government has set targets to reduce adult smoking rates from 26% in 2002 to 21% or less in 2010 (Milne, 2005) with NRT adopted as the key support offered to achieve long-term cessation.

This research examines in detail the decision making process for smoking cessation to gain a greater understanding of the motivational drivers underlying behavioral change regarding this form of risky consumption. Goal theories are appropriate in this research context as the enactment of the behavior, namely use of NRT, only makes sense in the context of pursuing the goal of smoking cessation. As such, the research focus is not so much to gain a better understanding of the individual’s intention to enact the behavior, but of the engagement of the behavior in the context of pursuing the goal. Therefore a model, such as the EMGB, which affords simultaneous examination of the behavior, the goal and pertinent antecedents, is required. Specifically, this study stipulates smoking cessation as the smokers’ goal, with the use of NRT specified as the focal behavior adopted by smokers in pursuit of their goal of smoking cessation. The contributions of this paper are firstly an empirical examination of this recently proposed model (EMGB) in a different behavioral context, and secondly recommendations regarding the validity and utility of the model.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

In order to gain greater explanatory capability, the MGB aims to capture decision making behavior prior to intention formation, thus the variable of behavioral desire is introduced, which represents a conceptual shift from the TPB. The TPB is conceptualized as a rationale decision making model, and does not capture affective content. Perugini and Bagozzi (2001) proposed that the concept of desire is distinct from that of intention and constitutes the motivational drive towards intention. In the MGB, Perugini and Bagozzi (2001) formally posited that behavioral desire fully mediates the effects of the TPB antecedents (attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control) on behavioral intention. Desire is also conceptualized to encapsulate a future orientation, whereby future outcomes are deemed ‘desirable’ or ‘undesirable’. As such, the MGB specifies antecedents of positive and negative anticipated emotions to explain more fully variance in the construct of desire. Another key departure from the TPB is that intention is captured in the MGB as part of a broader concept of volition, comprising elements of intention, commitment, effort and planning (Perugini and Conner 2000). Past behavior too is utilized in the model to aid the explanation of behavioral desire and of volition. Thus, the MGB expands the TPB by incorporating additional dimensions of affect, motivation and habit. It further distinguishes itself by linking all elements of the model toward not just the behavior, but the behavior in pursuit of the goal. The extension of the model to the EMGB incorporates two additional elements, those of goal desire and goal perceived feasibility. The conceptual model of the EMGB is detailed in figure 1. Perugini and Conner (2000) argued that goal desire represents the desire to achieve the goal outcome and is the ‘key motivational construct’ (710) whereas goal perceived feasibility captured as ‘belief’ would exert strong influence on the individual’s perceived ability and level of difficulties in enacting the behavior (perceived behavioral control). In their study based on 104 students, Perugini and Conner (2000) found that the two additional EMGB constructs both made significant contributions to the model.

Assuming that the EMGB is valid in our behavioral context, logical deductions based on past research (Perugini and Conner 2000; Perugini and Bagozzi 2001) lead to the following set of hypotheses.

H1: Smokers with a more positive attitude toward using NRT to aid cessation will have a greater desire to use NRT to aid cessation.

H2: Smokers with a greater desire to cease smoking will have a greater desire to use NRT to aid cessation.

H3: Smokers who perceive higher levels of positive anticipated emotions associated with succeeding in smoking cessation will have greater desire to use NRT to aid cessation.

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H4: Smokers who perceive higher levels of negative anticipated emotions associated with succeeding in smoking cessation will have less desire to use NRT to aid cessation.

H5: Smokers who perceive greater normative pressures to use NRT to aid cessation will have a greater desire to do so.

H6: Smokers who have a stronger belief in their ability to cease smoking will perceive a greater level of control and fewer barriers in the use of NRT to aid cessation.

H7: Smokers who perceive a greater level of control and fewer barriers in the use of NRT to aid cessation will have a greater desire to do so.

H8: Smokers with a greater desire to use NRT to aid cessation will have a stronger volition to do so.

H9: Smokers who have used NRT to aid cessation in the past will have a greater desire to do so.

H10: Smokers who have used NRT to aid cessation in the past will have a stronger volition to do so again.

**METHODOLOGY**

This study examined 202 female smokers aged 16-36 in Scotland. Women were selected to participate in this study as they represent the higher percentage of the UK population who smoke (28% in 2003) and are also more likely to have tried to give up the habit and failed in the past (Mintel 2004). Recognition is also given to attitudinal and consumption differences between genders as highlighted by Reynoso, Susabda, and Cepeda-Benito (2005), therefore, a single gender focus on women yields more homogeneity and hence greater validity to the findings. The survey instrument and measurements utilized in this research are adapted from Perugini and Conner (2000). Following their guidelines and that reported in Perugini and Bagozzi (2001), two aggregated measures are obtained for each construct except for goal desires and subjective norms which are measured with two items each and past behavior which is measured with one item. The constructs within the EMGB and examples of their associated measures are given in the appendix. Structural equation modeling (SEM) via Amos 6.0 and SPSS 14 were used in the analyses.

**RESULTS**

The mean and standard deviation for each construct are given in table 1. These show that most respondents have not attempted to stop smoking with the aid of NRT in the past year and that attitudes towards the use of NRT as an aid to smoking cessation are mixed. A strong indication of perceived social pressure to engage in the behavior was recorded. The perceived behavioral control values suggest that respondents on the whole expressed mild concerns as to the difficulties in the use of NRT to aid cessation. Strong positive anticipated emotions were expressed with only mild negative anticipated emotions recorded. Desire for the goal of stopping smoking was not particularly strong in this group, with mild reservations expressed in terms of perceived feasibility of attaining the goal of stopping smoking. Finally, desire for the use of NRT to stop smoking was very mixed with slightly lower level of volitions expressed.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was undertaken to assess the degree of convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement model comprising ten constructs and nineteen aggregated variables. This model yielded adequate fit ($\chi^2(111)=210.47, p<.01$, GFI=.90, AGFI=.83, CFI=.96, IFI=.96, RMSEA=.067 and AIC=368.47) according to the usual conventions (Hair et al. 1998; Hu and Bentler 1999). All regression paths are significant at $p<.01$. Estimates of construct reliability and average variance extracted (see table 1) are adequate (Bagozzi and Yi 1988) with the exception of the construct goal perceived feasibility. The correlations observed between the constructs are generally low with $r<.7$ except for three pairs of constructs: volitions and goal desires expressed.

FIGURE 1

THE EXTENDED MODEL OF GOAL-DIRECTED BEHAVIOUR (EMGB)

Adapted from Perugini and Conner 2000.

GFI–goodness of fit index; AGFI–adjusted goodness of fit index; CFI–comparative fit index; TLI–Tucker Lewis index; IFI–incremental fit index; RMSEA–root mean square error of approximation; AIC–Akaike information criterion
time frame would most likely yield little predictive power and does not reflect the behavioral contexts investigated in the literature on the MGB or the EMGB to date. In light of this argument and given the size of the correlation (r=.94) between volitions and behavioral desires reported in the CFA, the decision is made to adopt a combined construct based on the four composites underlying both volitions and behavioral desires.

The construct goal desires can be argued to satisfy the three criteria listed. However, this construct still lacks discriminant validity from the combined volitions and behavioral desires construct and is removed from further analysis. The resultant model (see figure 2) was examined and results show similar fit with \( \chi^2(106)=251.82, p<.01 \), GFI=.87, AGFI=.81, CFI=.93, TLI=.91, IFI=.93, RMSEA=.083 and AIC=345.82. All regression paths are significant at p<.05 except for the path from negative anticipated emotions to the combined construct (volitions and behavioral desires). Explanatory power of the post hoc model is commendable with \( R^2=.54 \) for the combined construct and \( R^2=.54 \) for the construct perceived behavioral control.

**DISCUSSION**

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) has been shown to perform well in modeling human decision making with adequate predictive power averaging 39% of explained variance in behavioral intention (Armitage and Conner 2001). Nevertheless, many attempts have been made to improve the TPB based on reservations regarding its sufficiency in terms of bridging the intention-behavior gap. Researchers have proposed broadening the theory by additions to the set of antecedents such as, self identity (Sparks and Shephard 1992) and moral norms (Beck and Ajzen 1991). A fundamental re-conceptualization of the TPB was offered through the addition of affective components of desire and the integration of automotive, affective and motivational processes within a goal setting. As such the MGB and its extension, EMGB, can be said to redefine the decision making process as conceived within the TPB. At the heart of these models are the new constructs goal desires and behavioral desires with central roles in decision making leading toward intentions or volitions in the context of goal-directed behaviors.

Researchers have taken great effort in justifying both theoretically and empirically the distinction between desires and intentions (Perugini and Bagozzi 2004a,b). Central to the theoretical argument is the set of criteria proposed (Perugini and Bagozzi 2004b)

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**TABLE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S. D.</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Construct Reliability</th>
<th>A.V.E.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volitions</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1–7</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Desires</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>0–10</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>1–7</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Norms</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>1–7(^a)</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Behavioral Control</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0–10</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Anticipated Emotions</td>
<td>7.20</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1–7</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Anticipated Emotions</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>0–10</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Desires</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>1–7</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Perceived Feasibility</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>0–10</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Behavior</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note.— \(^a\) lower values indicate stronger social support, \(^b\) number of times NRT used to quit smoking in the last year

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(r=.85); volitions and behavioral desires (r=.94); and goal desires and behavioral desires (r=.77). Discriminant validity was formally assessed using the procedure of Fornell and Larcker (1981) by determining if the squared correlation between each pair of constructs was less than the average of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each of the constructs. This confirms the lack of discriminant validity between the three constructs highlighted.

Notwithstanding these observations, the model as proposed by Perugini and Conner (2000) is examined via SEM analysis. The proposed model (see figure 1) yielded fit statistics \( \chi^2(131)=293.97, p<.01 \), GFI=.86, AGFI=.80, CFI=.93, TLI=.91, IFI=.93, RMSEA=.079 and AIC=411.97, showing overall tolerable agreement between the specified model and the data. However, five regression paths are not significant with p>.10. These are outlined in table 2.

Given these results, hypotheses H3, H4, H7, H9 and H10 are not supported and the EMGB is reduced to a model where attitude, subjective norm and goal desires are the only exogenous constructs significantly impact behavioral desires which in turn make a sole contribution to the endogenous construct of volitions.

**Post hoc analysis**

The lack of discriminant validity between the proposed constructs volitions, behavioral desires and goal desires and the lack of support for five of the hypothesized relationships lead one to reconsider the legitimacy of the EMGB in this study. Perugini and Bagozzi (2004b) examined the distinction between desires and intentions within decision making based on three main criteria: perceived performability, action-connectedness, and temporal framing. According to these authors, actions that individuals desire tend to significantly impact behavioral desires which in turn make a sole contribution to the endogenous construct of volitions.
which purports to allow examination of the differentiation between these two constructs. The criteria of perceived performability, action-connectedness, and temporal framing are, thus, offered to assess the degree of distinctiveness between the constructs of behavioral desires and intentions.

Applying these criteria to the behavioral context reported in this paper leads us to re-examine the appropriateness of the use of the EMGB for this study. Behavioral desires in this context captures the desire of smokers to use NRT (the behavior) as an aid to smoking cessation (the goal). As such performability of the action (using NRT as an aid to smoking cessation) is not at issue as NRT is widely available and easy to use. Further, it is difficult to see how behavioral desire could not be considered action-connected, as the focus of the desire is directed toward the behavior, in our case the use of NRT to aid smoking cessation. Finally, the behavior, though not necessarily the goal, would most likely be framed in the near future as predictions of temporal distant behaviors would offer little benefits. It may be argued that behavioral desire should be operationalized to be more goal-directed in order to meet these criteria. However, that would pose difficulties in explaining separation from the construct of goal desire.

Other applications of the MGB and EMGB in the literature show a range of behavioral contexts covering dieting, exercising, studying, learning a software package, group participation (riding, shopping, socializing), keep fit and helping charity (Perugini and Bagozzi 2004a, 45). An examination of these behavioral contexts reported confirms the view that applications of the MGB and the EMGB to date do not support the assertion of theoretical distinction between behavioral desires and intentions based on the three criteria proposed.

Empirical evidence has also been presented to support the distinctiveness of the constructs behavioral desires and intentions.

### TABLE 2
RESULTS ON PROPOSED EMGB MODEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis and Path</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>Critical Ratio</th>
<th>Supported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1 Attitudes → Behavioral Desires</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>4.41 ***</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2 Goal Desires → Behavioral Desires</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>9.65 ***</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3 Positive Anticipated Emotions → Behavioral Desires</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.25 *</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4 Negative Anticipated Emotions → Behavioral Desires</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.64 *</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5 Subjects Norms → Behavioral Desires</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>3.58 ***</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6 Goal Perceived Feasibility → Perceived Behavior Control</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>2.53 *</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7 Perceived Behavior Control → Behavioral Desires</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.85 *</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H8 Behavioral Desires → Volitions</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>23.00 ***</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H9 Past Behavior → Behavioral Desires</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>1.53 *</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H10 Past Behavior → Volitions</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.05 *</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

![FIGURE 2 POST HOC MODEL](image-url)
### APPENDIX

**CONSTRUCT DEFINITIONS AND ASSOCIATED MEASURES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Definition and examples of measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Behavioral desires| The motivational state of mind wherein appraisals and reasons to act are transformed into a motivation to do so.  
  e.g. I desire to use nicotine replacement therapy in the next 3 months to try to stop smoking                                                                 |
| Anticipated emotions | Prefactuals hypothesized to influence desires to perform a behavior  
  e.g. If I succeed in achieving my goal of stopping smoking I will feel-excited, proud                                                                              |
| Past behavior     | Frequency of the occurrence of the behavior in the past.  
  e.g. How many times you did use nicotine replacement therapy during the last year to try to stop smoking                                                        |
| Volitions         | Comprises element of intention, plan, commitment and effort.  
  e.g. I will try to use nicotine replacement therapy in the next 3 months in order to stop smoking                                                                 |
| Goal perceived feasibility | The ease or difficulty of reaching the end state.  
  e.g. How much control do you have over stopping smoking in the next 3 months                                                                                   |
| Goal desires      | The valence of an action’s end state.  
  e.g. I desire to stop smoking in the next 3 months                                                                                                            |
| Attitude          | Overall evaluation of the behavior in pursuit of the goal.  
  e.g. I think that to use nicotine replacement therapy in the next 3 months to stop smoking is: useless-useful; foolish–wise; unattractive-attractive |
| Subjective norm   | Perceived peer and social pressure to engage in the behavior in pursuit of the goal.  
  e.g. People who are important to me think that I should / should not use nicotine replacement therapy in the next 3 months to try to stop smoking |
| Perceived behavioral control | Perceived easy or difficulty of overcoming barriers to engage in the behavior in pursuit of the goal.  
  e.g. How much control do you have over using nicotine replacement therapy in the next 3 months in order to stop smoking |

Note: definitions and measures adapted from Perugini and Conner (2000)

However, all the studies noted above showed a high level of correlation between the two constructs, although statistical tests have been utilized to reject the hypothesis that correlations take a value of unity, i.e. total agreement. Two observations come to mind. Firstly, the use of statistical tests which reject hypotheses of zero discriminant validity are potentially flawed, in that rejections of zero discriminant validity do not automatically lead to conclusions of concept distinctiveness. Secondly, given a sufficiently large sample, despite high levels of shared communalities between constructs short of total replication, any pair of constructs can be shown to be “distinct” under such statistical tests. More fundamentally, concept distinctness should be theoretically argued and justified within the proposed theoretical framework. Unfortunately theory is abstract in nature and when operationalized through models and measures can result in a corrupted and distorted form from which the underlying theory could not be reconciled.

One motivation for the introduction of the MGB and the EMGB is that of improving on the sufficiency of the TPB model. It is interesting and perhaps insightful to reflect on the results of Bagozzi and Dholakia’s (2002) study as reported in Perugini and Bagozzi (2004a). These results on group participation based on behavioral contexts of riding, shopping and socializing, provided empirical comparisons between the TPB and the MGB. Results ($R^2_{\text{Int}}=.12$, $R^2_{\text{Beh}}=.21$ for the TPB and $R^2_{\text{Des}}=.80$, $R^2_{\text{Int}}=.64$, $R^2_{\text{Beh}}=.22$ for the MGB for one study and $R^2_{\text{Int}}=.23$, $R^2_{\text{Beh}}=.14$ for the TPB and $R^2_{\text{Des}}=.58$, $R^2_{\text{Int}}=.41$, $R^2_{\text{Beh}}=.14$ for the MGB for the other) show no increase in explanatory power of the MGB in predicting actual behavior. More disturbing is that the MGB yielded far superior predictive power (by a factor of three) for intention when compared against the TPB. This study potentially demonstrates that model developments in pursuit of greater predictability of intention may indeed deliver such results, however, the real test of a model is its ability to afford explanation and prediction of actual behavior. Arguably, the TPB out-performed the MGB in Bagozzi and Dholakia’s (2002) study as high levels of variance captured for both behavioral desires and intentions yielded no additional benefits in the model’s ability to predict actual behavior. It is therefore pertinent to signal caution in studies utilizing the MGB or the EMGB where behavior is not captured and included in the model.

Given the concerns discussed above, the contextual results reported in this paper must be taken with caution. Our application of the EMGB failed to provide a validation of the model and, hence, its value is limited regarding recommendations of pertinent motivational factors influencing the adoption of NRT in the aid of smoking cessation.
REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Consumer behavior researchers and public policy makers continue to be plagued with the problem of creating communications which can increase the probability of complying with risk avoidance behavior such as smoking. Using Terror Management Theory as a theoretical basis, we conducted a field experiment designed to investigate the impact of mortality salience and self-esteem on whether smokers will comply with anti-smoking messages anchored in varying health and social themes (Taubman Ben-Ari, et al. 1999; 2000; Greenberg, et al. 1996). For individuals who smoke to enhance their self esteem, it is the threat of negative social consequences and not the threat of future health problems which matters most. We also investigate the impact of smoking self esteem (SSE) and mortality salience (MS) on health and social risk perceptions. In the field experiment, 150 smokers at a mall in southern California were asked to take part in an experiment. To test the differential effect of mortality salience on a wide range of smokers, we tested two types of actual PSAs (health effects and social death messages).

Data was analyzed through the use of 2(physical vs. social mortality salience) by 2(high vs. low smoking self esteem) between subjects ANOVAs. We measured intention to quit smoking, health risks as they relate to oneself and others around you, social acceptability of smoking, and risk of familial loss. First, we found the significant MS main effect was driven by a significantly greater intention to quit smoking when exposed to the social death message. The significant interaction effect reveals that SSE impacts smoking intent for the social death and not the health effects appeal. This provides further support for the premise that health effects do not persuade smokers whereas the social death message reveals a generalized effectiveness across a wide range of smokers.

There was a significant mortality salience main effect for the health risk perceptions such that smokers exposed to the social death messages were more likely to perceive the risk of smoking to their health as significantly higher compared to those who saw the health effects message. As for the social acceptability measures, we found both significant mortality salience and smoking self esteem main effects and a significant interaction effect. The social death message resulted in lower social acceptability ratings while high SSE smokers believe that friends and family find smoking to be more acceptable than low SSE smokers. More importantly, high SSE smokers who saw the social death message viewed the social risks of smoking as significantly more severe than those who saw the health effects messages. This effect was missing for the low SSE smokers. The familial loss results mirrored the social acceptability results. Overall, it appears that the impact of seeing a social death message brings home the reality of the familial losses unlike the health effects messages. These effects seem to be enhanced when a smoker is high in smoking self esteem, which is predicted by TMT and the fear of death literature. Self esteem seems to have little if any effect on familial losses for those exposed to the health effects messages. The combination of high SSE and exposure to the social death messages seems to enhance the perception that one can die from smoking.

The idea of making mortality and the fear of death salient for smokers can influence their respective risk perceptions and risk taking behaviors (Pechmann, et al. 2003). We expanded the view of mortality salience by placing it into a continuum from physical loss to both physical and social relationships. This broadened approach to mortality salience was integrated into a framework to understand how smokers’ self esteem interacts with the anxiety of death influencing their risk perceptions and risk taking behaviors. Thus, based on TMT when smokers are faced with thoughts of death by the images created in the health effects PSAs, they produce active coping defenses as reflected in their maladaptive responses to these types of fear appeals through the continued willingness to engage in the risky behavior.

To increase the probability of informing smokers of the danger of smoking, public policy makers must at least be able to provide this group with the information about the risks. With the general public, this research demonstrated the efficacy of the social death messages in influencing smokers, in general, to consider the risks of smoking. Additionally, marketers should consider communication strategies that would minimize resistance to persuasion when mortality or death-related thoughts are salient. Understanding the impact of TMT and risk perceptions as applied to marketing communication is critical. For example, communicating information on how to use a product correctly can result in attempts at counter-persuasion evoking a threat to someone’s cultural worldview.

By understanding the impact of how important smoking is to one’s self worth as well as the impact of making social and physical mortality salient, we may be able to provide guidance to policymakers (to develop persuasive anti-smoking messages) and to marketers (to provide persuasive marketing messages) to consumers (Maheswaran & Agrawal 2004).

References


INTRODUCTION

The Extended Model of Goal directed Behaviour (EMGB) is the latest decision making model which considers the role of a behavioural act in pursuit of a further goal. Perugini and Bagozzi (2001) attempted to deepen and broaden the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by addressing the areas of affect, motivation and habit. A limited number of empirical studies utilising the EMGB and its predecessor Model of Goal directed Behaviour (MGB) have been applied to a variety of behaviours including; body weight regulation, studying effort, the regulation of hypertension, learning SPSS software and eating in a fast food restaurant (Bagozzi and Lee, 2000; Leone, et al., 1999; Perugini and Bagozzi, 2001; Taylor et al., 2005). Overall the findings of these studies have concluded favourably on the MGB and the EMGB, and have shown that these models deliver superior performance when compared to the TPB in terms of predictive utility (Perugini and Conner, 2000). However, concerning the capture of affect through the antecedents of anticipated emotion it is interesting to note the lack of consistency in the empirical findings in this area. Examining the Bagozzi and Lee (2000) study on body weight regulation positive emotion alone was found to be significant; furthermore, in a test of studying effort (Leone, et al. 1999) negative anticipated emotion alone was significant. The current research recognises this inconsistency in the capture of emotion and a two phase study was launched to examine, in detail the role of emotions within the EMGB.

LITERATURE REVIEW–EMOTIONS AND THE EMGB

Underpinning the emotions element of the EMGB is the work of Bagozzi et al. (1998) with their creation of the model of goal-directed emotions and the Theory of Self Regulation (Bagozzi 1992). The core element that Bagozzi and colleagues are trying to capture in the EMGB is the intensity of the anticipatory emotion: “the intensity of the anticipatory emotion is the crucial aspect that gives them their motivational potential” (Bagozzi et al. 1998:4). Bagozzi et al. (1998) created a path model of emotion following the lineage of: Goal Situation ? Anticipatory Emotions ? Volitional Processes ? Instrumental Behaviours ? Goal Attainment ? Goal-outcome Emotions. This concept is rooted in the work of Weiner (1992) in terms of approach and avoidance behaviour that is, hope of success and fear of failure. This is realised in the sense of the directional capability of emotion depending on the goal appraisal made. Thus, positive anticipated emotion results in progress towards goal attainment and negative anticipated emotion results in movement away from goal attainment; a theory supported by numerous scholars including Oatley and Johnson-Laird (1987); Frijda (2000) and Bagozzi (1992).

This path model is based on the cognitive determinants of emotions whereby the stage of appraisal of a goal situation determines the relationship of a given emotion to a goal. Primary cognitive appraisal is what Lazarus (1991) refers to as a personal stake in ones well-being. The focus of the model resides around the notion that personal stakes are the motivating force behind the emotion (Brown et al. 1997). Thus, if a goal is of personal significance to a persons well-being then a greater level of emotion will be produced; which leads to action initiation. In the context of smoking cessation there is a strong sense of personal well-being at stake through successful achievement of the goal of smoking cessation that is, better health, more energy, longer life etc. Brown et al. (1997) cite a working paper by Bagozzi, Baumgartner and Pieters (1998) who claim that anticipated emotions with their motivational potential should trigger a chain of action orientated events including planning and effort intentions. Empirical studies including Brown et al. (1997) and Bagozzi et al. (2003) have demonstrated this link, showing support for the theory that anticipated emotion of goal outcome has an explanatory role in the decision making process.

Regarding the capture of emotional intensity, this is achieved through the cognitive measurement of emotion using a questionnaire, which dictates that a set of emotion responses and associated scale measurement are required. This categorisation has been the life long work of many emotion theorists and as Lazarus (1991) highlights, the reduction of the rich vocabulary of emotion terms that individuals use, to a cluster of basic dimensions will inevitably result in a certain loss of meaning. It is important to note the wealth of scholarly debate regarding the categorisation of emotion terms. There is no definitive register of what constitutes an emotion; for the purposes of this research the Shaver et al. (1987) set of emotion terms is used as this underpins the emotion element of the EMGB.

The EMGB captures emotion are captured through a set of emotion terms numbering 17 which are framed in terms of positive anticipated emotions in relation to goal success and negative anticipated emotions in relation to goal failure.

The current study is a two phase empirical examination of the role of emotions in the EMGB:

• Phase 1 aim: To test the EMGB in a new behavioural context, focusing on the role of anticipated emotion within the model.
• Phase 2 aim: Acknowledging that emotions were not significantly captured in the model a qualitative phase of research was launched to generate a new list of emotion terms, in addition to gaining a deep understanding of the role of emotions in this behavioural context and an improved understanding of the role of emotions in the EMGB.

METHODOLOGY

Phase 1 examined 202 female smokers aged 16-36 in Scotland. Women were selected to participate in this study as they represent the higher percentage of the UK population who smoke (28% in 2003) and are also more likely to have tried to give up the habit and failed in the past (Mintel, 2004). Recognition is also given to attitudinal and consumption differences between genders as highlighted by Reynoso et al., (2005), therefore, a single gender focus on women offers greater validity to the findings. Structural equation modelling was used to analyse the data collected, the analysis was undertaken using Amos 5.0 (Arbuckle, 2003). Phase 2 involved 13 semi-structured interviews, with female smokers. Christy & Wood (1999) are critical of small qualitative samples sizes as they can potentially exclude interesting findings that may
be gained from using a larger sample size. This point was considered and the approach of repetition was adopted, whereby after the 13th interview no new findings were being uncovered, instead the responses were becoming repetitive. The interviews were designed using a two tiered approach in order to elicit the correct range of information. Firstly a semi structured inductive approach was adopted to allow participants to discuss freely their thoughts, feelings, opinions and behaviour towards smoking. Secondly a structured element, guided by Shaver et al.’s (1987) list of 134 emotion terms was undertaken. Each interviewee was invited to select the emotion terms which resonated with them in the scenario of succeeding or failing to achieve the goal of smoking cessation using Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT). After identifying the emotions, interviewees were asked to discuss their thoughts, feelings and reasons for ticking the emotion terms. This allowed the researcher to perform a content analysis of selected emotions which could be rationalised into a useable emotion set through the interviewee’s feedback on the selection of their emotion terms. The interview transcripts were transcribed verbatim and analysed using a grounded theory approach to analysis.

**PHASE 1 RESULTS**

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for the model. Interpretation of the mean and standard deviation indicates that past attempts at smoking cessation have not been supported by the use of NRT which is reflected in a generally mixed attitude towards NRT. The influence of peer and social group in the sample was strongly indicated which is perhaps indicative of the behaviour of a relatively young sample. The perceived behavioural control variable demonstrates that only mild concern is expressed among the sample in terms of perceived barriers to using NRT as a smoking cessation aid. The role of emotions was mixed with Positive Anticipated Emotion (PAE) being expressed more strongly than Negative Anticipated Emotion (NAE). Although desire for the goal of smoking cessation was intermediate the desire for the use of NRT was more encouraging. The resulting volition figures were mixed with no strong indicators of behaviour expressed.

The EMGB model performed poorly with model fit statistics of $\chi^2=2664.686$; $\chi^2$/df=1145; $p=0.000$; GFI=0.626; CFI=0.799; TLI=0.785, RMSEA=0.081 and AIC= 2924.689) these figures are unsurprising due to the volume of variables which were shown to be not significant, as demonstrated in Figure 1.

Both emotion antecedents alongside past behaviour and perceived behavioural control were shown to be not significant on behavioural desire, whilst the path of past behaviour to volition was also shown to be not significant. This reduces the EMGB model to represent the variables of: goal desire, attitude, subjective norm and volition, these are the exogenous constructs that significantly impact on behavioural desire and consequently volition. This reduced model has adequate model fit yielding the following fit statistics: $\chi^2=1189.677$; $\chi^2$/df=202; $p=0.000$; GFI =0.763; CFI=0.898; TLI=0.884, RMSEA=.0103 and AIC= 735.203. The two key endogenous constructs of behavioural desire and behavioural volition yielded high $R^2$ values of 0.772 and 0.902 respectively showing the model to have good explanatory capability. The non significance of the emotion construct prompts a need for further investigation as prior studies (as discussed on Page 1) have shown a mixed empirical response, which the current study further supports. This indicates that the emotion antecedent is not performing well in the model across a variety of behaviours. In terms of smoking, there are established associations between smoking and emotion. Gilbert (1995) explains in detail how individuals relate their positive and negative emotions to smoking evidenced in scenarios such as, smoking to alleviate anxiety or smoking to gain pleasure from the nicotine sensation. Furthermore, smoking cessation is commonly linked with anxiety caused during nicotine withdrawal, with the cessation process referred to as “emotionally involving” (Biener and Taylor 2002:74). This presents a rather perplexing situation indicating that emotions are not being captured in the model despite being placed in the context of an emotionally charged behavioural situation. Recalling that the EMGB examines simultaneously a behaviour in pursuit of a further goal, in this scenario the behaviour is using NRT with the goal of smoking cessation. The EMGB model captures emotion through the use of 17 emotion terms in a questionnaire, split into positive and negative emotion scenarios that is: “If I succeed in reaching my goal of giving up smoking in the next 12 weeks” with a list of positive emotions and vice versa for the negative scenario. Phase 2 of qualitative research was launched in order to investigate the applicability of the existing emotion terms and develop a new set of emotion terms if required. Furthermore, this stage allows for clarification of the role of emotions in the model and provides a platform to gain a deeper understanding of emotions in the context of smoking cessation.

**PHASE 2 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Positive Emotion in Goal Failure**

The interviews produced surprising findings adding to the literature on the directional capability of emotion. In the scenario of failing to achieve the goal of giving up smoking a number of respondents indicated positive emotions, such as happiness. Respondents were invited to discuss these unexpected findings. Respondent Mona explains:

“A small part in me thinks that I like smoking so maybe at first I will have defeat and then annoyed and feel pity for myself [for having failed to give up] then I would have the displeasure and the regret that I lit up the cigarette and then I would just be a little happy that I could smoke again.”

This demonstrates the battle that smokers engage in during smoking cessation as they are essentially stopping themselves doing something which they often do enjoy. However, the double edged sword nature of smoking means that this enjoyment is accompanied by severe health risks. The dichotomous nature of smoking behaviour means that the decision making process can be flooded with mixed emotional experiences, which the current EMGB model fails to acknowledge.

**Negative Emotion in Goal Success**

As Mona discussed feeling happy by failing to achieve her goal of smoking cessation, several other respondents discussed negative emotions arising from goal achievement as Ashley explains:

"Frustration because I can’t have it and also anger because it would be like I can easily have that but I’ve got to stop myself so it’s constantly that I’m fighting a battle so I would get angry because I’m fighting that battle.”

Ashley mentions fighting a battle, however, this begs the question that although smokers may win the battle in the sense that they successfully stop smoking, do they ever win the war against always wanting to be a smoker? This reveals an interesting dimension to smoking behaviour whereby the physical aspects of cessation may be successfully achieved, however, the psychological dimension to the behaviour may still always be present, these

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(Continued on the next page.)
respondents suggest that a psychological addiction remains and, therefore, represents a key part of cessation therapy that needs to be addressed.

Examining the literature relating to goal directed behaviour and emotion, demonstrates that key authors within the field recognise that positive emotions are associated with goal attainment and negative emotions result in problems with ongoing plans for goal attainment (Oately and Johnson-Laird, 1987). A conceptually similar approach is adopted by Stein, Liwag and Wade (1996) cited in Bagozzi et al. (1998) who discuss the nature of events and their related emotions, that is, an event establishing goal success will lead to happiness and vice versa. Although psychology scholars have investigated the concept of mixed emotions (e.g. Sullivan and Strongman 2003; Larsen et al. 2004) to the authors’ knowledge, no acknowledgment has been given to the conflicting nature of emotions that can occur in goal directed behaviour, whereby positive and negative emotions can arise from failure to achieve a goal.

**Emotion Terms**
Respondents were presented with the Shaver et al.’s (1987) list of 134 emotion terms and asked to select the terms they identify with in the two cessation scenarios of succeeding and failing.

**TABLE 1**
**DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Mean (S.D)</th>
<th>Cronbach Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volition</td>
<td>4.27(1.55)</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural Desire</td>
<td>5.32(2.37)</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude (ATT)</td>
<td>4.13(0.96)</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Norm (SN)</td>
<td>1.72(1.27)</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC)</td>
<td>4.19(1.29)</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Anticipated Emotion (PAE)</td>
<td>7.2(1.70)</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Anticipated Emotion (NAE)</td>
<td>4.69(1.52)</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Desire (GD)</td>
<td>4.24(1.8)</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Perceived Feasibility (GPF)</td>
<td>3.92(1.5)</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Behaviour (PB)</td>
<td>0.53(0.90)</td>
<td>single item construct</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIGURE 1**
Regression Paths

![Regression Paths Diagram](image-url)
Following Richins’ (1997) recommendation that a manageable list of emotion terms, appropriate to the nature of the study be selected, a refined list of 11 terms in the table below was derived from the original list of 134. The emotion terms on the left side of the table are the terms used by Shaver et al. (1987) as emotion categories.

In order to create the list of emotions in Table 2, the reduction approach of Richins (1997) was adopted. Her approach involves various stages of diminution to produce a manageable list, the forthcoming sections explains how these stages were executed in order to arrive at the list in Table 2. The findings show that from a potential list of 134 emotions, in the scenario of succeeding to reach the goal of giving up smoking a total of 62 items were selected. Similarly in the case of failing to reach the goal of giving up smoking 38 items were selected. Those items left blank from the list were discarded at this stage based on the rationale that they were inappropriate in this context. The following stage of elimination was performed based on those items which had similar meanings, for example, glee and jolliness. All stages of elimination were directed by the interviewee’s transcribed material, respondents were asked to explain the rationale for selection of the individual emotions that they choose and, thus, issues such as straying from the goal concept became apparent. This allowed further elimination to be performed as it became apparent that on occasion respondents had selected emotions which strayed from the core concept of the goal.

The list was further revised to ensure that only emotion items that are common to smoking cessation behaviour remain. This explains how items such as elation, zest and thrill for example could be eliminated. Although respondents gave a justified rationale for selecting that specific term, they are not particularly common words used in the context of smoking cessation. Recalling that the aim of this list is for insertion into a large scale quantitative questionnaire, a decision had to be made in order to tame the lengthy list of emotions. This stage of reduction was not performed prior to the interviews being conducted to avoid any element of researcher bias to ensure that the information elicited from respondents was from the richest possible platform. This reduction phase follows that of Richins (1997) in stage three of her reduction strategy.

### Joy/Anger–Detailed Findings

Joy and anger are the two emotion categories which contain the largest number of emotion terms and therefore will be discussed in detail, demonstrating their relevance for inclusion in the list and also their pertinence to the individuals in the study who identified these emotions as key in smoking cessation attempts.

### Joy

The basic emotion term ‘joy’ contained the largest number of related emotions therefore it is unsurprising that the current list reflects this ratio. The following findings exemplify the method of reduction used with the full list of emotions. The content analysis revealed that 23 out of a possible 33 emotions were selected in this section. To illustrate how the qualitative findings guided the reduction phase the example of happy below is cited. Detailed qualitative analysis demonstrated that many of these terms were selected, yet represented just one concept.

**Interviewer:** [Respondent selected Gladness, Happiness, Elation, Satisfaction, Pride]. Ok then so looking at the ones under joy what were you thinking with each of them?

**Sarah:** I would just be the happiest person in the world if I managed to get rid of them and give up completely.

This demonstrates the way that respondents who were verbally expressive would take the opportunity to tick numerous emotion terms, however, exploration of this reveals that actually the core of what they are expressing can be summed up in one word ‘happiness’. Happiness was selected to represent numerous emotions within the joy category as it is a common emotion and a term that is in daily dialogue therefore people can easily resonate with it. None of the respondents offered any emotion terms that were obviously distinct from happiness therefore happiness was selected.

Within the basic emotion of joy it was clear, as the reduction pattern was followed, that a number of key themes were emerging. Due to the challenging nature of smoking cessation, represented in its high failure rate, the majority of respondents had tried to give up

### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Emotion Terms Selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>Happiness, Satisfaction, Optimism, Pride, Relief.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Jealous, Anger, Annoyed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>Disappointment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>Anxiety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>No emotion terms selected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surprise</td>
<td>Surprise.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in the past and failed. For this reason most identified with the emotion of satisfaction that would come with goal achievement. As Sharon describes:

...sort of satisfaction with myself for actually being able to do it for once because it’s something that I’ve thought about on and off for so long and if I actually manage to do it, I’ll be so satisfied.

Pride is another emotion which follows the theme of admiration for the self in achieving this challenging behaviour. Whereas satisfaction is derived from succeeding after many failed attempts, pride is a result of the difficulty that people have in succeeding at giving up smoking as Yvette and Katy both explain:

Interviewer: And pride you mentioned that as one of the first things that you’d feel.

Yvette: Yeah that feeling of accomplishing something that a lot of people can’t do so I’d be proud of myself if I managed to do it.

Katy: Pride, the fact that I can quit and so many people can’t, I’ve done it ‘look at me I’m an ex-smoker’!

Within this joy section of emotion terms examples of co-occurrence (Richins 1997) were uncovered. Co-occurrence is used as a reduction tool by Richins (1997) which represents those emotions selected by respondents, which occur only as a result of a previous emotion experience. For example, triumph was selected in the content analysis; however it was revealed that triumph occurs as a result of pride. Eliminating co-occurrence resulted in further refinement of the list.

The final two emotions selected under the banner of joy are optimism and relief. Optimism was a theme which resonated throughout the interviews, as respondents discussed how success in giving up smoking would translate into optimistic feelings about other dimensions of their life. This serves to reinforce the importance of smoking cessation in people’s lives as Erin explains:

Yeah I just think that if I can do that [give up smoking] then it makes me think that anything is possible. So if I can do that then the sky is the limit!

Perhaps due to the addictive nature of smoking, respondents discussed cessation as an ultimate challenge in their lives. Hence, achievement of this goal signifies a ‘can do’ attitude and this optimism can be translated into other areas of life. This is a good example of a context specific emotion term, which supports the idea that if emotions are to be captured within the EMGB a uniformed list of emotions may not always prove to be significant, due to the wide variety of emotions that can be experienced in a goal behaviour situation. Relief is the final emotion term selected and also fits the bracket of being context specific and relates to the challenging nature of the behaviour. Relief is experienced as a result of goal achievement, as it occurs, usually after failed attempts and through its significance in people’s lives as discussed earlier. Ashley explains why relief would be something she would experience:

Yeah the relief that I’m now a non-smoker and the feeling that I’ve done it...when I can completely say that I do not like smoking it will be a relief for me and it’ll be like, well I’ve done it and I will never do it again, hopefully, but I just got that feeling that I would get relief from not smoking.

Thus far the emotion terms selected under the basic emotion ‘joy’ have been discussed. The following section addresses the basic emotion of anger, which has 3 emotion terms: Jealous, Anger and Annoyed.

Anger

When discussing the anger emotions there were a number of reasons given for the selection of these terms. Jealousy was a strong emotion that respondents selected. Kat described feeling jealousy as a result of seeing other people smoking and Ashley talked of how she thinks she would feel if she gave up and her boyfriend smoked:

When my boyfriend would light up a cigarette I pictured my getting really jealous and also because these are feelings that occur at different stages so in the first couple of months I know that when he lights up a cigarette I’ll be like, I’d want one and I’d be jealous of him smoking and I can’t because you say no you can’t so you won’t, so I know I’d be jealous of him or somebody else lighting up.

This quote serves to highlight the complexity of emotion within the goal behaviour context; whereby Ashley is discussing jealousy but identifying it as an emotion at a stage within smoking cessation. This idea of stages, points to a future research direction in terms of understanding the impact of these conflicting emotions in the decision making process. For example, Ashley above discusses feeling jealous but recognising that this occurs in the initial couple of months, suggesting that beyond this time frame she wouldn’t feel jealous. Does this hold true for other people and other emotions? Are the conflicting emotions, part of the initial stages of the cessation process, as indicated here? This highlights an area for enhanced support for individuals at this key stage, to assist in the management of these negative emotions before they become inhibitors to successful cessation.

Anger and frustration were often discussed synonymously by respondents. However, deeper probing suggested that anger was the more distinct emotion that was being referred to, whilst frustration was actually more closely related to annoyance. Anger is a strong emotion that respondents used and it was often directed towards themselves for having little willpower as Yvette summed up:

Anger is just anger at myself for having such little willpower.

Identifying that anger is an emotion experienced as a result of goal failure also shows an area for additional support for smokers. It is widely acknowledged that willpower alone is not a successful cessation strategy, yet it is the one adopted by the majority of smokers trying to stop.

Finally, annoyance was selected for inclusion to the list as it was popularly described as the way respondents felt at trying to stop smoking and failing. The annoyance tends to reside in the fact that respondents, from past experience, have started smoking again through a seemingly trivial event, which has triggered the habit again, as Gemma explains:

I was just more annoyed with myself because I had started smoking again and thinking I don’t need to be doing this but yet I’m still doing it and it was fine when I was on holiday it didn’t even seem, I didn’t feel disappointed on holiday because I was having such a good time on holiday but when I came back to Scotland..........I thought oh no I shouldn’t have done that on holiday I should just not have smoked.
Sadness

Within the basic emotion of sadness, there was an overwhelmingly strong identification with the emotion of disappointment. Due to the importance of the decision to give up smoking, respondents explained that if they had set themselves the goal of giving up smoking and failed then sheer disappointment within themselves to the importance of the decision to give up smoking, respondents feel anxious about the future and how to cope as a non-smoker; always fighting to maintain cessation. Victoria discussed how she of their stress relief (cigarettes) is gone, resulting in the feeling of etymology, and other emotion terms which are represented by anxiety, anticipated succeeding in giving up smoking rather than if they cessation as it was shown to be far more prevalent if respondents selected for inclusion. This emotion terms reveals a level of intuitively, surprise captures the theme in a less dramatic manner and thus is perceived to be more applicable to a wider number of respondents. Astonished and surprise were discussed synonymously by respondents with no obvious distinction on the meaning of the items.

Fear

Fear is an interesting basic emotion in the context of smoking cessation as it was shown to be far more prevalent if respondents anticipated succeeding in giving up smoking rather than if they failed. When discussing this area respondents identified with anxiety, and other emotion terms which are represented by anxiety, through the notion that being a non-smoker means that the source of their stress relief (cigarettes) is gone, resulting in the feeling of always fighting to maintain cessation. Victoria discussed how she feels anxious about the future and how to cope as a non-smoker; whilst Kat envisages feeling anxious because if she succeeds she’ll want to maintain but will be constantly tense and anxious that she would revert back. This emotion represents another complex layer of smoking behaviour emotion whereby goal achievement can be accompanied by conflicting emotions.

Love

In this context love and its related emotion terms were not found to be applicable. Although a few emotions were selected, discussion revealed that these terms were misconstrued or were being applied outwith the specific goal criteria; findings which are concurrent with Bagozzi et al. (1998) who do not include love emotions in goal behaviour either.

Surprise

Within the surprise emotion bracket, surprise itself has been selected for inclusion. This emotion terms reveals a level of controversy within the literature as some scholars (Fehr and Russell 1984) do not regard it as an emotion term, yet others do include it (Shaver et al. 1987). The concern with surprise, this resides in the method of creating emotion lists, such as the one devised by Shaver et al. (1987). These lists are generated through individuals reporting on the most common emotion terms that they refer to within a set time frame. The rationale for the rejection of surprise is based on the fact that only a small number of people describe surprise as an emotion within one minute of asking. Despite this Shaver et al. (1987) chose to include this emotion in their list, claiming further research into the term is required. Within the context of smoking cessation surprise has been identified as an appropriate emotion to include due to the nature of the behaviour as Erin explains:

Yes well I would be surprised if I did stop smoking, going on my track record and past experience I know I’ve tried so many times and gone back to it I’d be genuinely surprised if I do actually manage to stay off it.

As smoking is habitual and addictive, cessation is relatively difficult; this coupled with people’s failed attempts in the past as Erin mentions, means that successful cessation results in surprise. Although more respondents chose astonished rather than surprise, intuitively, surprise captures the theme in a less dramatic manner and thus is perceived to be more applicable to a wider number of respondents. Astonished and surprise were discussed synonymously by respondents with no obvious distinction on the meaning of the items.

CONCLUSION

The empirical stage of this research represents an initial introduction of the EMGB into the marketing field where the focus of the model is directed towards the use of a product in the pursuit of a further life goal. The qualitative phase demonstrates the depth of information gained through taking a context specific approach to emotion capture. A list of emotions specific to smoking cessation were generated with a new dimension to emotion theory also being uncovered. The impact of this research stretches to the wider sphere of emotion capture in consumer behaviour. In terms of wide scale consumer behaviour research, much of this is conducted quantitatively through a questionnaire, therefore a list of context specific emotions could add validity to emotion findings. Furthermore, this research adds to the debate regarding the directional capability of emotion. Consumer behaviour researchers should acknowledge that positive emotion can result in a goal success or failure situation and vice versa. In terms of goal theory this is pertinent for models such as the EMGB and Theory of Self Regulation. Regarding future research these findings offer several directions for further exploration. In terms of capturing the motivational potential contained in emotion; the author is currently performing an empirical test to determine the effects of positive emotion in goal failure and negative emotion in goal success to assess the impact this is having on future behavioural intentions. It is suggested that this could be a reality for behaviours categorised as ‘risky behaviour’ as there is often a conflict in this decision making process (i.e. binge drinking, condom use etc). Furthermore, a context specific list of emotions should be compared to a standard emotions set to determine the validity of incorporating this phase of research into future emotion studies. The author is currently operationalising this within the EMGB.

REFERENCES

Arbuckle, James L. (2003), “AMOS 5.0,”


Social class and (some) related wives’ work involvement (WWI) variables have long been valued by marketers as primary or supplemental bases for segmentation because they capture differences in values, norms, roles, lifestyles, and broad consumption patterns. These constructs have also been embraced because they capture the composite effects of a number of related demographic descriptors such as occupation, education, income, age, and family size. In the general domain of family research, WWI has emerged as a substantive research area in large part due to the vast social changes in the past few decades (Reilly 1982; Zeithaml 1985). The purpose of this research effort is to develop a new consumer behavior construct “Dual Spousal Work Involvement” (DSWI), and to compare its performance to that of alternative WWI models. DSWI represents the occupation and work involvement of both spouses, not just wives (WWI) or husbands (social class). This concept represents a natural step forward in the evolution of earlier work in the areas of WWI, social class, and gender-role norms. The basic premise is that the joint impact of both husbands’ and wives’ occupation and work involvement more effectively captures important underlying values, gender role norms, and lifestyles than do extant approaches.

The manuscript develops a conceptual framework depicting the various antecedents (e.g., social class at birth, gender role norms) and consequents (e.g., work and time pressure, consumption patterns) of both spousal work involvement. This approach leads to an eight-category classification scheme based on the relative occupational status and work involvement of both husbands and wives. The results show that the DSWI model outperforms extant WWI models and that this scheme isolates strong and meaningful consumption pattern differences for both non-durables and durables.

**RELEVANT LITERATURE**

**Social Class Measurement:** Social class models have generally not devoted appropriate attention to the wife’s educational and occupational status. Traditional social class scales included only husband’s status measures based on the assumption that a family’s social class didn’t change when the wife went to work. However, researchers have reported that social class misclassifications are likely when they do not incorporate the wife’s occupation status (Coleman 1983; Haug 1973). Despite such findings, no one has developed a widely accepted scale that accurately reflects the impact of women’s work status to a household’s social class.

**Wives’ Work Status/Involvement:** Early studies on WWI simply compared working vs. nonworking wife households, with the expectation that differences in shopping behavior, food consumption, and appliance expenditures would emerge due to time pressures and greater income. Even though these expectations were not supported (Douglas 1976; Strober and Weinberg 1977), that simple division continued to receive research attention (Jackson, McDaniel, and Rao 1985; Weinberg and Winer 1983). However, these early counter-intuitive findings led other researchers to search for more complex classification schemes and more refined operational definitions. For example, by classifying working wives into high versus low occupational status, scholars have found significant differences in food and beverage consumption, shopping behavior, deal proneness, makeup usage, television viewing and ownership, and restaurant patronage (Joag, Gentry, and Hopper 1985; Schaninger and Allen 1981). Similarly, Bartos’s (1982) classification of working women into “just-a-job” and “career” segments and nonworking women into “plan-to-work” and “stay-at-home” segments has been shown to capture some differences in norms and values, food and beverage consumption, and shopping behavior (Schaninger, Nelson, and Danko 1993; Zeithaml 1985). While these approaches have been useful, they have not provided consistent insights into household consumption behavior (Commuri and Gentry 2000). Hence, a new approach that incorporates the work involvement of both spouses seems to be in order.

**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF DSWI**

The objective of the DSWI model is to incorporate changing values and gender norms and develop a comprehensive framework to understand and classify modern families (see Figure 1 for a pictorial representation). The DSWI model is based on a cross-classification of occupational status and career commitment of both spouses. Since DSWI provides a more appropriate representation of modern households, it should be more useful than existing models in capturing and explaining attitudinal and consumption differences. Hence,

**H1:** The DSWI framework would outperform alternate WWI models.

**H2:** The various segments that emerge from the DSWI classification scheme would exhibit meaningful differences in attitudes, motivations, and consumption patterns.

**BACKGROUND DEMOGRAPHIC AND ATTITUDBINAL/MOTIVATIONAL INFLUENCES**

Parents’ education and occupation (augmented by interactions with parents, teachers, and peers) positively influence a child’s academic aptitude, teenage educational and occupational aspirations, and, thus, subsequent educational and occupational attainment (Alexander, Eckland, and Griffin 1975; Stevens 1986). Household social class and mother’s work experience positively influence the child’s gender role modernity and education, which, in turn, leads to having a full-time job prior to marriage (for women), age at marriage, and career orientation. Year of birth and parental education and occupation are positively related to holding nontraditional social values and non-conventional gender role norms (Schaninger and Buss 1986; Yankelovich 1981). Current Demographic and Attitudinal/Motivational Influences: There seems to be an interactive, reciprocal relationship between demographic status and attitudes and motivations. For example, the educational and occupational attainment of each spouse plays a significant role in shaping their attitudes and motivations—through their education, workplace socialization, and interactions with peer groups. Similarly, gender role norms influence a person’s (especially women’s) educational and occupational attainment, openness to nontraditional values, and subsequent work involvement and delayed ‘family’ life cycle progression (Scanzoni 1975, 1983); these effects are more pronounced among children of dual-career families (Stephan and Corder 1985). Modern gender role norms are tied to more egalitarian division of household responsibilities and rewards. Such changes in gender role norms are accompanied by shifts in self-fulfillment aspirations and social values [i.e., increase
in working wives and mothers, acceptance of women pursuing careers, and more individualistic (self-fulfillment) rather than traditional familial gratifications (Scanzoni 1983)].

**Current Household Demographics:** Family income and presence/number of children have been recognized as covariates of WWI. Family income influences expenditures on major appliances and other durables, services, food and beverages, and restaurants. Presence and/or number of children covaries positively with major appliance ownership and expenditures (Nickols and Fox 1983; Strober and Weinberg 1977, 1980) and consumption of convenience and junk foods, but covaries negatively with meals prepared away from home and with alcohol consumption (Schaninger and
Danko 1993). Mothers of young children prepare more meals at home, but spend less time on housework and prepare less difficult food items (Nickols and Fox 1983). While upper-middle and upper social classes tend to be more gender role non-conventional, and lower classes tend to reflect the ‘old’ traditionalism, the (lower) middle class is split between those who emphasize traditional norms and those who subscribe to more modern values (Assael 1998; Coleman 1983).

**Work and Time Pressures/Role Conflict and Overload**: Role conflict exists when two or more positions (e.g., wife, mother, career woman) result in roles with conflicting or inconsistent expectations. Role overload is a type of role conflict that occurs when the expectations of the various roles exceeds available time and energy. Time pressures and psychological stresses due to role conflict and role overload are highest among dual career families and full-time career wives, particularly those with young children (Reilly 1982). Working wife families are motivated to reduce time pressures and psychological stresses through the use of timesaving and time-consuming strategies, including purchase of appliances, services, convenience foods, and meals away from home; and reduced time on cooking, household work, and food shopping (Reilly 1982; Zeithaml 1985).

**Household Consumption Behavior**: Household demographics influence food and beverage consumption. Working wives were more frequent purchasers of restaurant, fast-food, and take-out meals, even after adjusting for family income and husband’s occupation (Kim 1989; Nickols and Fox 1983). Research suggests that high proportions of working wives used convenience foods, and that the type of convenience foods used varied with life cycle stage. Non-career, wives who worked long hours and had young children, were more likely to purchase meals outside the home (Madill-Marshall, Heslop, and Duxbury 1995; Schaninger, Nelson, and Danko 1993). Also, high occupational status wife households consume quality foods, distilled alcohol and imported wines more frequently (Schaninger and Allen 1981; Schaninger, Nelson, and Danko 1993; Waldrop 1989). The social class literature has suggested greater dollar values for home furniture, primary homes, and automobiles among higher social class households (Assael 1998; Schaninger 1981). However, neither the WWI classifications nor econometric studies have been able to isolate differences in expenditures for durables. Given its comprehensiveness, the proposed DSWI classification is more likely to capture differences in values of home entertainment devices, furniture, and major durable acquisitions.

**METHOD**

**Sample and Procedure**: The data was collected using systematic random sampling from the telephone directory of a top 50 Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Overall, 2171 households were reached. Of these 1160 agreed to participate and were sent the survey. This mailing returned 307 usable, 19 undeliverable, and 10 unusable surveys. Three additional mailings of 500 surveys each were conducted on the non-respondent sub-samples: first-wave resulted in 54 usable responses and 10 undeliverables; second-wave resulted in 34 usable returns and 37 undeliverables; and the third-wave resulted in 49 usable responses and 27 undeliverables. No significant differences were found between the three latter samples and the original sample for a variety of demographic characteristics. Thus, they were combined to yield a total of 444 households, representing a 20.45 percent response rate (i.e., 444/2171). The combined sample did not significantly differ from MSA or nationwide census estimates with respect to percent of owner occupied housing, age, marital status, presence of children, or male and female labor force participation.

**Questionnaire**: The first section was completed jointly by both spouses. It ascertained household demographics, household food and beverage consumption, dollar values of major durable acquisitions, home entertainment devices, and furniture, as well as dichotomous ownership of major and minor durables and use of services. Frequency of use of household food and beverage consumption was ascertained for 46 food and beverage items, using seven-point itemized scales ranging from “nearly every day” to “never”. Those items were developed based on previous studies of socio-cultural consumption influences (Schaninger and Allen 1981; Yankelovich 1981) and were subjected to content, factor, and reliability analyses. The remaining parts of the survey consisted of an individual questionnaire for each spouse eliciting attitudinal/motivational determinants and consequences. Thirty-five six-point Likert scale items were examined for each spouse, subdivided into four categories based on content and exploratory factor analyses (maximum likelihood factor analysis with oblique rotation and delta=0): gender role norms; self-fulfillment aspirations; traditional family and moral values; and work and time pressures. Wife’s shopping behavior was measured using six-point Likert scale items.

**Classification Measures**: Part-time, full-time, nonworking, and retired status, as well as occupation, was ascertained for both spouses. Occupational status was determined by open-ended questions asking for occupation and job title. Following the method prescribed by Schaninger and Allen (1981), families with working wives in the top three occupational categories of the Hollingshead social class index (managerial-professional, administrative, and lesser professional) were classified as high wife’s occupational status. Those in the lower categories (secretarial, clerical, retail sales, technicians, blue collar, and service workers) were classified as low status. The Wife’s Occupational Status scheme was based on separating high and low occupational status working wives from nonworking wives. Both spouses, if not currently working, were asked whether they “do not plan to (return to) work”, “plan to (return to) work in the near future”, or “plan to (return to) work when my children are older”. Similarly, both (if working or planning to work) were asked to indicate whether they regarded their work as “just a job” or as “a career”. The Bartos scheme was based on separating ‘career’ from ‘just-a-job’ working wives and ‘plan-to-work’ from ‘stay-at-home’ nonworking wives. Comparative multivariate results are subsequently presented for the four most widely used WWI models (Working vs. Nonworking; Full-/Part-time/Nonworking: Wife’s Occupational Status, and the Bartos scheme), plus the new DSWI scheme, detailed below.

In contrast to extant models, the proposed DSWI scheme is based on occupation and work involvement for both spouses, not just that of the wife (as in wife’s work involvement studies), or husband (as in most social class studies). The guiding rule in developing categories was that they represent at least 2.5% of the sample and attain a sample size of at least 20. This is larger than the minimum of 12 specified by Pazer and Swanson (1972) as sufficient to yield a normal distribution of means for a uniformly distributed population. This procedure yielded eight categories for DSWI: 1) Retired Couples; 2) Non-working Wife Low Husband Occupation Status Couples; 3) Non-working Wife High Husband Occupation Status Couples; 4) Dual Low Occupation Status Blue-Collar Husband Couples; 5) Dual Low Occupation Status Low White-Collar Husband Couples; 6) High Husband Low Wife Occupation Status Couples; 7) Medium High Wife Occupation Status Couples (sub-
divisions of high and low husbands’ occupations were not significantly different and led to a decline in overall model performance; and 8) Dual Very High Occupation Status Career Couples. If a wife was working and her husband was retired or currently unemployed, his occupational status was based on his prior occupation and job title.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The performance of DSWI model is compared to that of alternative WWI models and the substantive attitudinal and consumption differences are discussed in detail. Table 1 presents summary multivariate and univariate test results for wives’ and husbands’ attitudes and values, household food and beverage consumption, wives’ shopping behavior, and values of home entertainment devices, furniture, and major durable assets. The number of significant univariate F-values is listed in Table 1 (i.e., 3 + 1 indicates 3 values significant at the .05 level and 1 additional value significant at the .10 level). In addition, values of [1 – Wilks’ λ] representing the proportions of explained multivariate variance, 1 and multivariate F-values for Hotelling’s T² are presented for all variable sets. For both dollar value sets (with many zero values), square root transformations (√(x + √(x + 1))) were employed to alleviate skewness and heterogeneity (Kirk 1968). The F-tests of the DSWI model are relatively conservative because they consume a large number of between group degrees of freedom compared to the other models, and because they test for bi-directional differences among all eight groups. The modest cell sizes are likely to increase type II errors at traditional levels (p<.05) of significance. Hence, the univariate significance counts at (p<.10) are presented separately. The ratio of the observed to the critical value for an alpha of .001 is provided to permit comparisons of the relative strengths of multivariate significance.

While all models produced multivariate significance for wives’ and husbands’ attitudes and family food and beverages, Wife’s Occupational Status and Bartos models outperformed the more naïve working/non-working dichotomy and full-time/part-time/nonworking trichotomy. More importantly, the proposed DSWI scheme clearly outperformed all other models on most variable sets in terms of multivariate variance explained and was equivalent to the best wives’ work involvement model in terms of univariate significance counts for wives’ and husbands’ attitudes. It demonstrably outperformed all WWI models for univariate significance counts, multivariate significance levels, and percent of variance explained for household food and beverages as well as the dollar values of home entertainment devices, furniture, and major durable acquisitions. Under the DSWI scheme, multivariate F-values for all criteria sets were significant, many at the .001 level. The DSWI model accounted for over 80% of the multivariate variance for both husbands’ and wives’ attitudes, versus only 48% for husbands and 66% for wives for the best WWI model. It explained almost 80% of the multivariate variation in household food and beverage consumption versus less than 50% for the best WWI model. Further, it dramatically outperformed extant models, explaining nearly 30% of the multivariate variance for dollar values of home entertainment devices and furniture, and major durable assets when each set is considered separately. When these variable sets were combined, the DSWI model explained around 50% of the total variance compared to 10% for the best alternate WWI model.

Significantly, all the multivariate results and most of the univariate tests hold even after controlling for family income with only slight decrements in value of [1 – Wilks’ λ] for MANCOVA’s (see Table 1), a result that is in direct contrast to that of econometric studies of WWI. The DSWI scheme does not perform as strongly as more parsimonious wives’ WWI models for wives’ shopping behavior, perhaps a result of consuming larger degrees of freedom and reducing between-group variance. With this exception, the DSWI scheme dramatically outperforms the leading alternative models both before and after controlling for family income. Two additional covariate analyses were conducted: First, using husband’s Hollingshead husband’s occupation, husband’s and wife’s education and age, and number of pre-school-age and total number of children home, as covariates (each taken singly) and second, using family income and all of the above variables together in a combined covariate analysis. As expected, there were declines in univariate significance counts, particularly for husbands’ attitudes, for DSWI after adjusting for the full covariate set. However, all the multivariate results of DSWI held for the single as well as the combined MANCOVA. Thus, DSWI captures meaningful differences in attitudes and consumption patterns that are not attributable to (and in many instances stronger than) traditional social class indicators like husband’s occupation and education, offering a robust and promising segmentation base to marketing practitioners.

Since the MANCOVA and MANOVA results largely parallel each other, only the MANOVA results are discussed further. The main results and a priori comparisons for wives’ and husbands’ attitudes and values, food and beverages, and dollar values of home entertainment devices and furniture, and major durable acquisitions are discussed below:

**Norms, Values, and Time Pressures:** The wives’ and husbands’ gender role norms, self-fulfillment aspirations, traditional values, and work and time pressures are grouped together for multivariate testing to avoid multi-collinearity. Consistent with theory and prior studies, Dual Very High Occupation Career Couples were the most gender role modern, followed by Medium High Wife Occupation Couples, with husbands in the latter group highest on some items. Retired and Non-working Wife Low Husband Occupation Couples (especially husbands) were most traditional, followed by Dual Low Occupation Blue-Collar Husband Couples. Other dual working households placed in the middle of the pack.

Though weaker than gender role norms, the results for self-fulfillment items followed the expected pattern with few exceptions. Self-fulfillment aspirations were highest for the Dual Very High Occupation Career and Medium High Wife Occupation Couples and lower for Non-working Wife Low Husband Occupation and Dual Low Occupation Couples. The largest discrepancy between wives and husbands occurred in the Retired Couples category. Specifically, among retirees, women scored much higher on items related to work quality, personal interests, and self-improvement than men. This finding suggests that male self-fulfillment aspirations might be more closely tied to their careers whereas females tend to obtain self-fulfillment in other spheres as well.

As expected, for traditional family values, the pattern of results was the opposite to that of modern gender role norms. The results are strong and consistent for both sexes. Dual Very High Occupation Career Couples held the least traditional values, followed by Medium High Wife Occupation Couples. In contrast, Retired Couples held the most traditional values followed by Dual Low Occupation Blue-collar Husband Couples.

With regard to work and time pressures, one would expect differences in the pattern of results between wives and husbands depending on their occupation status and this is borne out by the results. For wives, the group reporting the greatest work and times

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1The multivariate significance of the value of (1-Wilks’ λ) test adjusts for the number of variables examined and their intercorrelations, and is conservative if multi-collinearity is present.
pressures was Medium High Wife Occupation Couples, followed by Dual Very High Occupation Career Couples—perhaps due to greater stresses among the former still developing their careers, and the presence of young children. Wives in the Dual Low Occupation Low White-Collar Husband group were highest on the two items related to feeling rushed and not having enough time to spend their money, and well above average on several other items. Wives in the Dual Low Occupation Couples (both blue-collar and white-collar husbands) also reported above average work and time pressures. Thus, it appears that being in lower status blue or white-collar jobs or “being on the way up,” leads to greater work and time pressures, and this effect may be influenced by presence of younger children. Wives in the Retired and Non-working Wife Low Husband Occupation groups felt the least work and time pressures, followed wives in the Non-working Wife High Husband Occupation group. In general, working wives reported greater time pressures than husbands, but lesser work related stresses and interference with family. The pattern for husbands was less straightforward. Husbands in higher occupation status categories generally reported greater work-related stresses and time pressures, but there was more idiosyncratic variation and the differences were not as large as in the wives. High occupation husbands with either a non-working or low occupation groups felt the least work and time pressures, followed wives in the Retired and Non-working Wife Low Husband Occupation groups. Thus, it appears that being in lower status blue or white-collar jobs or “being on the way up,” leads to greater work and time pressures, and this effect may be influenced by presence of younger children.
possibly reflecting greater pressures due to the presence of children, a working spouse earning less income than needed, growing career demands, longer hours, and conflict with family time. Households in Dual Very High Occupation Career group felt less work/time pressures than their High Husband Occupation counterparts with non-working or low occupational status wives. This may reflect that the former had already attained success and established their careers. Households in the Retired Couples category reported the least work and time pressures as expected.

Food and Beverage Consumption: Dual Very High Occupation Career Couples were the heaviest users of all healthy staples (except fresh vegetables) and were generally lower in usage of most convenience foods, including TV dinners, canned foods, hot dogs, and instant coffee. Consistent with prior research, they were the heaviest consumers of restaurant meals and Chinese take-out. They also placed above average on take-out pizza and fast food consumption. Like upper middle class and college-educated consumers, they tended to be very low (next only to Retired Couples) in consumption of most junk foods such as candy, potato/corn chips, presweetened cereal, and powdered drink mixes. They were among the lightest users of sugar substitutes and diet soda, demonstrating the tendency of highly educated consumers to avoid artificial additives. Reflecting the opposite pattern, Dual Low Occupation and Non-working Wife Low Husband Occupation households had the highest consumption of junk and convenience foods and the lowest consumption of healthy staples. Retired households had the highest consumption of sugar free products and lowest consumption of junk foods and meals away from home, a reflection of their dietary needs as well as lifestyles. Couples in which the husband was of low occupation status tended to be lighter users of healthy staples and heavier users of junk foods, both among dual working couples and non-working wife couples, reflecting general social class tendencies.

Due to their social class backgrounds and work related stresses, Dual Very High Occupation Career Couples were the heaviest users of all types of alcoholic beverages, including imported and domestic wines, beer and light beer, and distilled spirits. High Husband Low Wife Occupation households were next highest in alcohol consumption, except for regular beer. In general, heaviest consumption of imported and domestic wines, light beers, and distilled spirits is observed among the highest status, highest work involvement couples. In contrast, lower consumption is observed among lower occupation (especially husband) and retiree households. Retired Couples in general report lower alcohol consumption than other groups (except for distilled spirits) reflecting age effects and absence of work related stresses. Medium High Wife Occupation Couples were below average on alcohol (other than beer) likely due to lower middle class tendencies. Consumption of distilled spirits was lower amongst couples with lower middle class and blue-collar occupations, perhaps due to general social class tendencies, and lower income.

The above pattern of results suggests that occupation status, work and time pressures, income, and social class interact to determine family food and beverage consumption patterns, and that simple linear relationships do not hold. For this reason, the DSWI scheme is able to identify patterns of food and beverage consumption differences that could not be isolated by alternative WWI models or by econometric models using macro-level data.

Values of Major Durable Acquisitions: Dual Very High Occupation Career households had the highest mean values for stereos, primary TV’s, VCR’s, primary homes, primary and 2nd autos, the second highest mean values for furniture, and very high values for second homes. These findings do not reflect simple income differences, but appear to reflect upper-middle and upper social class background, desired lifestyles, and self-fulfillment orientations. These couples were below average in mean values of 2nd and 3rd TV’s, and trucks/vans/3rd autos products often associated with affluent blue-collar lifestyles. As expected, Dual Low Occupation Blue-Collar Husband households had the highest expenditures on recreational vehicles (campers, boats, motorcycles, and ATVs). The profile of Non-working Wife High Husband Occupation households seems to reflect affluent upper middle class lifestyles among families with children at home, with full-time housewife mothers reflecting traditional family values. Such households had the highest mean values for 2nd and 3rd TVs, personal computers, furniture, and high mean values for primary homes, 2nd autos, stereos, primary TVs, and VCRs. Non-working Wife Low Husband Occupation households represent less affluent, younger, recreation-oriented, blue-collar households who exhibit very high mean values on trucks/vans/3rd autos, and on recreational vehicles. These households had very low mean values for 2nd and 3rd TVs, personal computers, primary homes, and 2nd autos, stereos and furniture. The highest husbands’ occupational status households tended to own the most expensive primary homes and furniture, consistent with upper-middle/upper social class influences.

CONCLUSIONS

This research developed and demonstrated that the DSWI model isolated significant differences in husbands’ and wives’ gender role norms, self-fulfillment aspirations, traditional family values, and work and time pressures. The DSWI scheme exposed key differences in household food and beverage consumption patterns and dollar values of home entertainment devices and major durable acquisitions. It accounted for over 80% of the multivariate variance for both husbands’ and wives’ attitudes, almost 80% for household food and beverage consumption, and, most notably, nearly 50% for dollar values of home entertainment devices and furniture and of major durable acquisitions. Hence, both H1 and H2 are strongly supported. These are not merely income effects as all the results hold even after controlling for family income. The results suggest that incorporating the relative work involvement of both spouses captures rich interactive effects.

While very high status DSWI couples held more modern gender role norms, self-fulfillment aspirations, and non-traditional values, they did not experience the greatest work/time pressures—probably because they were more established and successful, had already attained career success, even though they were more likely to have young children. They were heaviest consumers of healthy staples, restaurant meals, and most forms of alcohol but avoided sugar substitutes, junk foods, and convenience foods. They put forth the least shopping effort, used fewer coupons, and acquired more expensive major durables. This pattern strongly contrasts to those of retired couples, non-working wife couples, and low occupation status dual working households. Hence, as specified by the DSWI framework, work and time pressures, income, gender role norms, and social class background interact to determine household consumption patterns. These findings and this approach should be very useful to marketers, demographers, and sociologists interested in understanding differences between traditional households and their more individualistic and career-oriented counterparts. This approach captures important Gestalt profiles that underlie the different motivations, norms, lifestyles, and consumption patterns that separate such households. Thus, DSWI, at a more macro level, focuses on the fundamental social and cultural changes in values, norms, and lifestyles which have ‘shaken’ most industrialized and many developing societies; changes that have led to a very different world than that which existed a few decades ago. A major limitation of this research is that the findings and specific operational defini-
tions are based on a single study using a modest-size data set from one metropolitan area in the United States. A second limitation is that the data are a few years old. However, given both the marketplace and socio-cultural changes, it is likely that newer data would increase the applicability of the DSWI model. In the past few years, electronic devices, shopping, and food options have expanded and changed dramatically. Most baby boomers have entered later life-cycle stages and remain affluent. Researchers should test the usefulness of DSWI by using new/multiple data sets that include measures of DSWI, attitudes, motives, and consumption patterns. Researchers could also explore whether DSWI would be applicable to rapidly developing and more traditional societies.

The principle contribution of this research is developing a new integrative approach for classifying families/households based on the work involvement of both spouses. The strong empirical support for DSWI suggests that it is a rich, multi-faceted, socio-cultural construct. It offers novel new insights and could be used as a basis for segmenting diverse product markets. For example, advertising high quality healthy foods or restaurant fare more toward career-wife households and food and beverage coupons and sales promotions toward non-working wife households. In addition, marketers could benefit from focusing on specific sub-categories that emerge from the DSWI classification scheme.

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The Experience of Home Foreclosure: Coping with Involuntary Loss of Home and Transition of Identity
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This study reports the results of interviews with homeowners experiencing foreclosure—that is, the loss or threatened loss of the home, arising from involuntary default on a home loan. It examines the lived experience of consumers facing the potential, and probable, loss of both the home and that part of self identity derived from being a homeowner.

For a U.S. consumer, a house is often the largest purchase or investment made, and among the most meaningful. Even from a purely economic or functional perspective, the home is a multi-dimensional possession, satisfying human desires for shelter, privacy, stability, and environmental amenity (Smith 1970). However, the concepts of home and homeownership extend further to signify richer personal and social meanings (Becker 1977, Cohen 2004, Duncan 1982, Holt 1998, Yu 2004). The home is more than a place to live—it is a representation of self. Homeownership is more than a legal distinction—it is a representation of one’s social status. Homeownership represents an aspiration which, when realized, symbolizes achievement and provides evidence of competence (Dholakia and Levy 1987). It is symbolic of control over one’s life, signifying financial security, family stability, and the values that render those achievements important. As stated by one of the informants in this study:

Pam: Your job is very valuable, your health is very valuable, and your home is very valuable.... To me, nothing is more valuable.

The home and one’s status as homeowner influence both the way one is perceived by others and the way one perceives oneself. According to a Roper Poll (“There’s No Place Like Home” 1997), when asked which of two-dozen items say the most about who you are, Americans ranked home as first, ahead of job, hobbies, and a multitude of personal possessions.

The importance of home and homeownership, and the fact that one’s home is imbued with symbolic, even “sacred,” meanings is well documented in studies of possession meaning (Ahuvia 2005; Belk 1988; Claiborne and Ozanne 1990; Doyle 1992; Hirschman and LaBarbera 1990; McCracken 1989; Richins 1994; Yu 2004:). A home is more than a consumption item; it is a representation and extension of self (Belk 1988, Tian and Belk 2005). It is more than a shelter; it is a symbol of family unity. It is more than a financial investment; it represents a personal outlay of time, effort, and loving attention. For the young, the purchase of a home may represent a rite of passage into adult maturity. In mid-life, the home may represent a sanctuary, providing physical and symbolic respite from the outside world. For the elderly, the home may evoke memories of one’s life and relationships, and serve as a physical repository of the past. And for their adult offspring, the childhood home may represent rootedness and continuity. As observed by Czinkzentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981):

Few English words are filled with the emotional meaning of the word “home.” It brings to mind one’s childhood, the roots of one’s being, the security of a private enclave where one can be free and in control of one’s life. (p. 121)

... a home is much more than a shelter; it is a world in which a person can create a material environment that embodies what he or she considers significant. In this sense the home becomes the most powerful sign of self of the inhabitant who dwells within it. (p. 123)

It follows then that the threatened loss of one’s home may be equally symbolic, representing not just the threatened loss of a valued possession and investment equity—itself devastating—but more potently, the threatened loss of an important contributor to one’s definition, concept, and sense of self. Indeed, several authors have observed the involuntary loss of important possessions to be accompanied by a diminishment or perceived violation of one’s self, and even changed meaning of life (Belk 1992; Hill 1991; Sayre 1994; Young 1991).

This study documents the experience of homeowners in foreclosure through depth interviews. Numerous shared themes emerged, including emotional and behavioral responses, and consumption/decision-making strategies. However, underlying all these themes was a potent experienced diminishment of self as tied to the symbolic meanings of home and homeownership. In most cases, this was followed by attempts to restore the self through a redefinition of the loss as, not as loss of home, but merely as loss of house. Coping processes were consistent with positive adaptation as predicted by coping theory, with informants proceeding from largely negative to largely positive psychological states (Folkman and Moskowitz 2000; Lazarus 1993; Zeidner and Endler 1995). To aid understanding of the experience of homeowners in foreclosure, the following section provides an overview of the foreclosure process.

FORECLOSURE AND THE HOMEOWNER IN DEFAULT

Foreclosure is a statutorily defined process whereby a secured lender seeks recovery from a defaulting borrower. The process may begin at any time after loan payments become delinquent. In nonjudicial foreclosure states (e.g., California), the lender exercises its “power of sale” over the property that provided the security for the loan. The sale is via public auction (trustee’s sale) to the highest all-cash bidder. The trustee’s sale date is preceded by a time period during which active steps may be taken to avoid or minimize loss. The California foreclosure process extends over approximately four months. Three months after the recording of the Notice of Default, if the loan has not been reinstated by bringing the payments current, the lender may proceed to schedule a trustee’s sale. The same may be scheduled 21 days after the posting, publishing, and mailing of the Notice of Trustee’s Sale. Once the reinstatement period has expired (five days prior to trustee’s sale), the lender may require a full redemption to cure the default. The lender may also consent to postpone the trustee’s sale, and is likely to do so if the homeowner has taken steps to cure the default, usually by arranging to sell the property or to secure new financing. Most frequently, homeowners effect postponement by petitioning for federal bankruptcy protection, but this provides only a temporary reprieve.

The foreclosure period is a crucial time and, thus, the focus of this study. A homeowner’s actions during this time carry consequences instrumental to future living standards and quality of life. Financially, foreclosure is associated with loss of property, loss of
accumulated equity, eviction, and credit damage. From a more personal perspective, foreclosure is associated with humiliation, emotional trauma and, sometimes, negative coping behavior.

Despite the gravity of foreclosure for consumers, little research exists pertaining to homeowners in foreclosure. Gross (1994) studied consumer responses to the time pressures during this crucial period, documenting responses such as denial, panic, and procrastination. However, most research is from the perspective of the lender, focusing on accumulated equity and other economic factors as predictors of default. Such research provides little insight into the experiences of individual homeowners. For example, the models do not take into account emotional responses or non-economic considerations such as attachment to the family home and desire to maintain an appearance of stability, which might overwhelm economic rationality.

**METHOD**

The limited consumer research on loss in general, and the paucity of consumer research on foreclosure loss in particular, suggests the appropriateness of descriptive, discovery-oriented research design. An attempt was made to document the experience of foreclosure from the perspective of those experiencing it (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Specifically, the study employs depth interviews. As described by McCracken (1988, p. 9):

> The method can take us into the mental world of the individual, to glimpse the categories and logic by which he or she sees the world. It can also take us into the lifeworld of the individual, to see the content and pattern of daily experience. The long interview gives us the opportunity to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves.

The threatened foreclosure of one’s home involves an extreme form and degree of potential loss. It is typically associated with stigma and shame, and calls up sensitive and emotional issues beyond the “typical” consumer/homeowner experience. This author did not presume to understand *a priori* the perspective homeowners might take on such an unusually stressful experience. Thus, it was decided to delve into the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions accompanying foreclosure, and to regard the informants and their experiences holistically.

**Sample.** Data were obtained through interviews with 14 homeowners identified through public records as being in foreclosure. Potential informants were contacted by mail. To obtain a relatively homogeneous sample, only owner-occupants in neighborhoods judged as “middle-class” (as indicated by home value) were contacted. This purposeful sampling was to increase the likelihood that informants had similar resources at their disposal for resolving the foreclosure. It was determined to continue interviewing until the interviews became somewhat redundant. Given the relatively homogeneous sample, this happened well before the fourteenth interview.

The use of University envelopes and letterhead differentiated the mailing from other solicitations. Several respondents remarked on being beleaguered by solicitation letters and would have disregarded this letter had it not “looked different.” Informants were also promised 50 dollars upon completion of the main interview. This proved to be a strong motivator. As shared in interviews, informants were carefully budgeting grocery money, canceling insurance policies, denying their children simple luxuries, and taking other steps to save money. Some had utilities disconnected, cars repossessed, and credit cards discontinued. Informants expressed that this incentive was badly needed for basic expenses.

Six of the 14 main interviews were conducted in homes and eight were completed on the telephone (supplemented by a “drive by” with descriptions of the home included in field notes). All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. The phone interviews did not suffer in terms of quality and were comparable in length to in-home interviews. All informants were open and forthright in telling their stories. By allowing telephone interviews, some participated who otherwise would not, and thus a possible source of bias was eliminated.

**Data Collection.** Prior to scheduling the main interview, each informant was asked to complete a short screening interview via telephone to establish rapport and obtain preliminary information. As the strategy for the main interviews, homeowners were asked to “start at the beginning” and discuss what they were doing, what they were thinking, and how they were feeling as the foreclosure progressed. Informants were asked to “help me understand what it was like.” Interviews were kept loosely structured and nondirective so homeowners would feel free to broach topics of concern to them in their own ways. In the context of discussing almost any aspect of their experience, all spontaneously returned to discussing their anticipation of the future, revealing it as both a source of concern and of hope. This is consistent with adaptation as predicted by coping theory (Folkman and Moskowitz 2000; Zeidner and Endler 1995).

An iterative and emergent approach was used in conducting the main and follow-up interviews (Schouten 1991; Strauss and Corbin 1990). Data collection, transcription, and preliminary analysis proceeded concurrently, and this aided in refining the direction of later interviews. Following the main interviews, informants were contacted for shorter follow-up interviews (one to four interviews per informant), conducted for purposes of updating and clarifying, exploring emergent themes, and checking conclusions for truthfulness. These took place from a few days to five months after the main interviews. Total interview time per informant ranged from one to four hours, with a mean of 2.3 hours. This generated 32.5 hours of taped material. Interviews were transcribed verbatim, yielding 533 typed, single-spaced pages, and supplemented by other interview/field notes.

**Analysis.** Analysis involved procedures common to interpretive analysis—an iterative process of coding, categorizing, and abstracting data (McCracken 1988, Strauss and Corbin 1990). Coding key words, phrases, and passages revealed data of thematic similarity. Through repeated readings and employment of a “part-to-whole” mode of interpretation (Spiggle 1994; Thompson et al. 1989, 1990), categories were re-examined and further sorted and clustered to identify common patterns and principal themes. The final analysis integrated the themes by relating informants’ accounts to a backdrop of shared cultural meanings derived from literature on possession and home meaning. The individual responses of informants were consistent with the spoken or unspoken background of socially shared meanings including “home as family,” “home as financial security,” and “home as an expression of self.”

**Triangulation.** Emerging conclusions were submitted to informants to confirm their truthfulness. Additionally, triangulation involved expert checks with six real estate and legal professionals, and over a three-year period, the author attended more than 40 seminars and training sessions, and read trade books and articles on foreclosure.

**RESULTS**

The informants were eight women, five men, and one married couple interviewed both jointly and separately and counted as one informant. Ages ranged from late 20s to early 60s, eight were
married, and several had dependent children. Most were long-time residents, with four having lived in their homes 20 years or more. Job loss, business failure, illness, and disability precipitated the foreclosures. Several sold their homes just before the trustee’s sale. Some acquired temporary financing, but ultimately lost or sold their homes. The majority stalled the foreclosure by declaring bankruptcy. Most attempted to negotiate with their lenders. They also sold personal property, cashed in insurance policies, liquidated retirement accounts, rented rooms to boarders, and/or borrowed from family.

Interviews revealed intensely emotional responses. Informants described themselves as anxious, fearful, and under stress. They described the experience as traumatic, overwhelming, degrading, and humiliating. Homeownership represented an achievement for these consumers and was integral to their identities. Almost universally, the potential loss was accompanied by a sense of personal failure and diminished sense of self. Two major themes associated with possession meaning and self identity emerged. Both provide evidence of positive adaptation as predicted by coping theory (Folkman and Moskowitz 2000; Zeidner and Endler 1995).

Making a Home a House

Without exception, informants showed an eventual disconnection from the idea of the property in foreclosure being “home” and “sacred.” They came to psychologically sever themselves from the property in foreclosure; redefining it, not as a home, but merely as a house. Roster (2001) observed this tendency in disposition of a variety of possessions. This represents an adaptive coping mechanism and aided these informants in transforming their outlook from one that was overwhelmingly negative to one that was primarily positive.

Informants typically described feelings of deep personal attachment to the home. At the beginning of the foreclosure process, several equated foreclosure with the most serious of tragedies and losses.

Sue: Our lives are falling apart….. My husband, … killing him, absolutely to the marrow of his bone….. If you’ve never been in [foreclosure], you can’t identify with it. It’s like if you lost a child or something. Someone can tell you how they feel, but you can’t know unless you’ve been there.

Though many of their homes were quite modest, the informants almost universally took pride in pointing out features and describing how attractive and comfortable their homes were.

Bob: The arched doorway, I did all that. It’s got a lot of assets—fireplace, sloped ceilings, there’s a waterfall and pool outside, a patio….

They described the home as a source of personal identity to be preserved. Many described their homes as representing all they had worked for, and as central to their lifestyles.

Pam: You feel like “Am I going to lose everything?” … Because here’s everything I’ve worked for all these years. This is where I’ve lived and raised my family…. Every day you’re fighting for your home and your life…. There’s so much sentiment when you raise your family in one house…. So it becomes … it shouldn’t become your identity, but it becomes so much a part of your life.

Tom: You buy a house and then you want to maintain the house and the lifestyle. And it’s a nice house…. And I fell in love with it. I [have it] landscaped very nicely, very private and quiet…. When you get something like that, you really want to keep it…. It’s more than just security. It’s everything to me. It’s been my home. It’s my sanctuary…. I love this house.

Informants described the loss as more than the loss of property. They viewed the home as something personally created, and spoke of it with affection. They took satisfaction in added improvements and in the personal touches they had created. They took pride in ownership and care of the home, and resisted or avoided the idea that they might have to sell to an investor at a below-market price or list the house at a low price to sell quickly to prevent ultimate foreclosure.

Eva: Our house is in good condition … it has a pool, it has a new carpet, it has a barbecue pit, and enclosed patio, a garage, and it has roses around it. I take good care of it. It has a nice lawn…. The house is very cute…. [One investor] came to see [it]…. I noticed right away he didn’t seem that interested when I gave him the figures…. I guess he was expecting a very low [price].

Tom: I bought it as a fixer-upper. I pumped it up about $50,000 in value right off the bat. I got it looking really good…. It’s been everything to me…. I can’t take crumbs!

Sue: These [investors] want fixer-uppers. Well, my home is not a fixer-upper. We have a new roof, a new water heater, new dishwasher. We had this floor put in last year. I mean, we planned to stay here…. [Describing the low listing price] my agent had to work very hard to convince us to do that. Very hard. Because, to us, the house is worth a whole lot more…. This is our home.

Likewise, it represented the life they had built, and their place in the community.

Ron: [The worst thing for me] is losing a place to live. I’m established in the neighborhood, I like the neighborhood, I know everybody, I like the community.

Jan: I’m going to lose my home! I’m going to lose my world! … Our kids are in school here…. We’ll do anything not to lose our home … it’s all we have!

Pam: I never thought of moving, over the years. I worked and raised my children. [When we bought the house] it had nothing in it. It was just a bare house. So eventually, we [made lots of improvements]. You just figure, ‘Well, I’m not going anywhere else.’ … I can’t think of anything worse than to lose it all. It represents my savings and everything. Plus, there’s a lot of sentiment. I’ve been in this house a long time.

However, as the process continued and the almost certainty of either selling prior to foreclosure or losing the house to foreclosure became reality, informants engaged in active coping strategies (Duhachek 2005). They began a process of detachment from the home (Roster 2001), and positive and rational thinking toward the future (Duhachek 2005). They redefined what they once viewed as sacred and irreplaceable as merely a house, a material possession, or just real estate (Kleine et al. 1995). Informants began to view as sacred and important what they could take with them, and severed ties with what they were leaving behind. For example, in a follow-up interview, it was clear that Jan, who had earlier resisted the idea
of being forced to sell, had begun to change her focus from the house as home, to her family as “home.”

Jan: If we have to move I would deal with it. I would do whatever I had to do. As long as we’re still together as a family, I would deal with whatever we had to deal with.

Later, when Jan and her husband, Joe, did sell the home, Joe described with enthusiasm another house in a less expensive area. The focus became the amenities of the new house, and more importantly, the restored stability of living without debt.

Joe: [Jan] didn’t want to sell, but when we look at the options and opportunities, the new house has carpet and drapes and all that … and this way we start over without any debt.

Similarly, Sue, accepting that she would lose her house and have to move, expressed:

Sue: … and [now] I do want to move…. I mean, when you think about it … this is just a roof, a house. I mean, that’s all it is. It could go in a fire or earthquake. It’s material possessions—that I’ve come to love—but it is just material possessions.

No longer speaking of the house as “our home,” she spoke of selling simply as a task to be accomplished so her family could move on. Finally, after the house did sell, she acknowledged that she had earlier valued the house as home, beyond its true monetary value.

Sue: We had to drop the price a bunch but that’s all right…. You know, your house is always worth more to you than it is to a buyer.

Others reached similar conclusions. Sentiments expressed during follow-up interviews were often sharply contrasted with initial interviews as informants redefined their feelings about the property in foreclosure. Rather than something sacred and personal, it often came to be viewed as just a material possession or even as a poor investment, responses consistent with rational thinking as a coping mechanism (Duhachek 2005).

Amy: People have asked me if I have real emotional ties to this house… It works, it’s convenient for me … but it’s not that I’m hung up on it, that I’m afraid to let go of it, or that it’s going to take me away from my comfort zone, or it’s going to break me from my past. It’s not anything stupid like that. It’s purely an investment.…..

Lea: It’s a material thing. We’re not losing a life. You have to put it in perspective.

Ron: I’m not going to die over [losing the house]. It’s a materialistic thing.

Dan: I don’t really care now. I don’t. I’m not that attached to the house right now…. If someone wants [to buy] it, they can have it. If [the bank has to foreclose], that’s fine…. The house no longer means anything to me.

Tom: My attitude now is, well fine, it’s all about dollars and cents…. I’ve stopped watering; the lawn is all dead now.

Some turned their attention to what they would be taking with them, elevating the importance of other possessions over importance of the house. Retained possessions were valued as helping to facilitate the transition and maintain a sense of continuity.

Liz: [After explaining she was no longer trying to make up the back payments] … Now, my furniture, I’m still paying for that because that’s important to me. I don’t want them to take my dining room set.

Bev: [I still have all my stuff] my [tools] from the shop, my antiques….The furniture is all mine. That’s the main part of the whole house. My furniture. That’s the way I feel.

Redefining the Self

In addition to redefining the home as “just as house,” informants also struggled to redefine themselves. Most informants emphasized that they had regarded their home purchase, and improvements added, as personal achievements.

Lea: It’s weird to look around the house. I mean, I’ve decorated it. It’s my home. All my stuff is here…. It’s my house. I’ve put $50,000 of my own money in here. [That] was hard for me to gather, it was hard for me to get, and I’ve been making payments all these years…. I was always taught as a child growing up, ‘buy property, buy real estate, never rent.’ So that has always been my goal.

Pan: It represents my savings…. It’s having your financial security ruined and the possibility of losing everything you have … everything I’ve worked for…. It took over 24 years to get to [this] point…. Being a homeowner was an integral part of their identity. Some asserted that they would continue to feel and behave like a homeowner. For example, Ron planned to rent his former house from the new owner who had purchased it at the trustee’s sale, and stated:

Ron: I don’t think I’m going to change emotionally the way I feel about the way I treat my yard or anything like that just because I don’t own it [any more]. In a home, especially if you were the homeowner, you have a sense of pride of homeownership.

Tom: Psychologically, I’m a homeowner. Have been and will always be that way.

Dan, though certain to lose his home, discussed how he had continued to maintain the property.

Dan: It might be stupid, but … I [recently] paid to have [the swimming pool] drained and repainted…. Cleaning it up a little because it’s still mine, even though I may lose it.

During the foreclosure process, however, most informants experienced their status as homeowner being diminished. Most felt stripped of an important part of their identity, and questioned their own competence. To lose the identity of homeowner was often more painful than the loss of the home. They grieved this as a personal failure.
Pam: You begin to doubt yourself. Like … ‘what’s wrong with [me]?’ … It really affects your self-esteem. … You never think you are going to be the one in the situation. … I can honestly tell you, it does a lot of damage to you … it damages your self confidence. It makes you wonder about your decisions. Because I always felt like a person who had taken care of things. I was in control of the situation. And suddenly you’re not in control. … You do berate yourself because you feel foolish to be in that situation. I should have known better. … I feel like a real flake.

Lea: When a single woman, uneducated, starts making that kind of money, is able to buy that kind of house, you have an ego. [So in losing my house], I had do deal with that.

Sue: You build it up so big in your mind. … It’s like brow beating. It’s like a drip of water that keeps slowly wearing away at you. It’s so continual. You feel like such a failure. A complete failure in life. … That’s what clicks in your mind is ‘failure.’

Liz: I was just totally disappointed in myself. … thinking about what a mess I made of everything. … I have no one to blame but myself.

The reality of being in foreclosure was antithetical to the informants’ self-concepts as responsible and capable. For example, Pam and Ben both described the distress of foreclosure by contrasting it with their prior self-assessments and ways of life.

Pam: [It’s] overwhelming because you think, ‘I’ve always been such a good citizen and paid my bills and paid my taxes.’ And here [I was] so close to having this home paid for. … I’ve always lived what I considered comfortably, to be able to pay my bills and have everything current; to have excellent credit. … I always told my kids, ‘You always had a roof over your head, your own yard … what was important.’ We were blessed … to have a home and security.

Ben: [The worst] is the failure of this happening. … I’ve had major disasters in my life … [but] the worst thing … is [this is] the only thing that I had that I could feel proud of that never suffered in my life. No matter what I went through [before] … everybody always gave paid. It was the one stable area of my life that had never been affected.

Others contrasted their views of themselves prior to the foreclosure with the sense of failure they felt now. They spoke of being independent, hardworking, and responsible, yet currently in a desperate situation as bad luck or consequences of a financial risk had spiraled out of control.

Bev: I keep thinking about all these years I worked and worked. I’ve always been a hard worker, very responsible.

Bob: Stupidity. I know there was a much better way to handle this whole thing than the way I did. … It doesn’t sit very well with me. I’ve made my own way since I was 17, and never depended on anybody, and made a good living, and lived a good living.

Lea: You feel like you’re completely hopeless and out of control. … [I felt like] ‘Why did this have to happen to me?’ I work hard. I save my money. I tried to invest in real estate. This shouldn’t be happening to me. I don’t deserve this.’

Amy: There was a sense of embarrassment … in [finding myself] not being able to provide, to produce. That’s real important to me.

As a means of restoring the self, informants isolated or compartmentalized the failure. First, they expressed an acceptance of responsibility (Lazarus 1993).

Ron: I’m disappointed in myself. … It’s been a pride-swallowing situation. Absolutely a disappointment. And I go through my fits of depression. … [But] I’m going to have to swallow my pride and live with the fact that I lost my house.

As they did so, most expressed determination not to equate this one failure with a failed life, and acknowledged this as an evolution from having originally associated loss of home with loss of self. Thus, they evolved from overwhelmingly negative to primarily positive psychological states. In many cases they practiced positive coping by taking active steps to limit the failure, to abort self-destructive behavior, and to make positive decisions to salvage their self-respect.

Liz: My emotions ran the gamut, but now I’m at peace. … I’m [no longer] drinking. I haven’t been drinking for quite a while. I … started wising up. I finally realized I cannot make payments, I cannot do this, I’ve got to start doing something about it. I’ve been able to get things in gear. I’ve grown up.

Dan made a decision not to declare bankruptcy. Though it would have been financially advantageous to do so, he regained self-respect by avoiding any further delay of foreclosure.

Dan: It’s a matter of what I think in life is critical. And [losing a house] is disturbing as far as my pride goes, but it’s not critical. I mean, losing a house—it’s a dwelling. There are lots of things that I have that I value far more than my house. … It’s more upsetting to me not to pay the debt. Losing a house is just losing a house. But I signed my name on the dotted line saying I was going to pay this thing. So it’s like an honor thing, and I don’t go back on my word. To me, that [would be] a bigger loss. [So] … I [won’t] file bankruptcy. That [would be] a personal affront. To me personally, that [would be] a slap in the face. I’m not going to slap myself in the face. … I made a promise to pay this [mortgage] and I can’t, so they can take [the house]. I’m not going to keep their money from them. … I [now] feel like I have a future.

Dan later described how he voluntarily moved from his home before he was required as a further means of restoring his sense of self.

Dan: Well, it got to the point of being in [my former house] rent free for all this time. But there’s no way I could even come close to making the payments on it. I found this nice little [rental] house and I said, ‘I’m going to get back into feeling like I can support myself.’ That was the reason for doing it. I said, ‘I’m not going to be able to keep the house. This is a losing proposition for me. I’m going to at least go back and contribute something to society somehow.’
Kim sold her house before the trustee’s sale. She was unable to salvage any equity, and thus did not gain financially by doing so. Like Dan, for Kim this meant moving sooner, and forgoing an opportunity to live in the house for a few months without making payments. Still, she valued the decision to sell and avoid ultimate foreclosure as helping to restore her self-respect.

Kim: I’d rather say ‘I sold my house,’ than have them … sell it out from under me.

Informants were anxious to once again view themselves as independent and competent, and to put the experience into perspective. Whereas earlier some had likened the experience of foreclosure to other personal tragedies, many later discounted the experience as compared with other tragedies as a way of reconciling their feelings.

Pam: I began to lose confidence in myself. And I thought, ‘Wait a minute. You have to shake that off.’ It’s not like death. So you get things back in focus…. [My advice to others] is as soon as it happens, you just have to let it roll off your back… Look at the poor people and the damage done to their homes with the mud slides and the floods. They can’t recoup their losses. And then you see people [who lost homes to] wild fires. I was heartbroken for them. Well-established people who had worked all their lives to get to that point, and then in one day it’s all lost…. It’s not even their fault. They did nothing but happen to be living there. And I thought of that. So all of a sudden, … what seems overwhelming suddenly comes into perspective. Then you think, ‘Hey, I got off easy.’

Kim: They ask me ‘How can you be so happy?’ And I’m like, ‘Well, at least my daughter doesn’t have leukemia, and my husband’s not having a heart attack.’ You have to look at everything that’s good. It’s hard to keep doing that, you don’t always feel like smiling and being happy, but you have to look at the positive things,…

In active coping, they took pride in remaining independent, and in being productive.

Kim: My mother and sister … they would try to buy me things [and give me small amounts of money], but I wouldn’t let them because I would have felt bad…. My grandpa has money and one day he mentioned, ‘You know, I’m really proud of you … for not trying to borrow on your inheritance.’

Pam: I’ve even been doing some volunteer work at my church. Whatever keeps you busy, and you’re helping out and you’re doing something. You’re using your skills,…

Some utilized the coping strategy of seeking social support (Lazarus 1993), reconciling their feelings by recognizing they were not alone in the experience.

Ron: I’m not the only person who is going through this. Foreclosures and bankruptcies are very high right now [so] …it’s not like I’m the only one on this ship.

Some reevaluated their priorities, demonstrating the coping processes of both accepting responsibility and of positive reappraisal (Lazarus 1993). Thus, they turned experience into a catalyst for positive change.

Lea: I try to look at it in a positive way. It’s been traumatic and it’s been difficult to get through, but people make changes when they get through traumatic situations. Either you make the best of it, or you fall by the wayside, and I’m trying to make the best of it. I’m trying to rearrange my priorities, to really determine what’s important to me now.

My values have completely changed after going through this. You kind of get your priorities squared away…. All I was doing was working and making payments. [Now] I want a completely different lifestyle…. [Now] we just want to have a real slow pace of life … be able to see each other more often, and be able to enjoy things that are important to us now…. I thought having a pretty house, a flashy car, and making a lot of money would make me happy. It didn’t make me happy at all. I think I’d be happier with some money in the bank, some time to myself and to share with my family, to be able to take time off when I want to take time off…. That, to me, is more important. Peace of mind is a lot more important than to have material things around you. My priorities were screwed up. It’s maybe even a moral lesson…. I think I’m going to be a better person…. I was on a treadmill and I couldn’t get off, and I wasn’t doing anybody really any good and I certainly wasn’t helping myself,…

CONCLUSION

While most consumer research has focused on acquisition and consumption, only scant research focuses on possession loss. This study contributes a degree of richness and holistic perspective to understanding the experience of involuntary loss in consumer behavior. Further, it sheds light on the specific, yet highly meaningful, aspect of consumer self-definition through possessions. It is one of only a few studies that specifically examine the meaning of home/house, and the experience of losing a home/house.

Consumers in foreclosure largely came to redefine the sacred home as just a material and secular house, and went through a process of self redefinition as well. Ultimately, consumers attempted to sever their identities from the home/house, and refocus on other priorities. In most cases, homeowners would have made timelier and more financially beneficial decisions had they been able to do this sooner. Future research might seek convergence by examining the experience of foreclosure through other methods. Understanding the meanings and self identity associated with home/house, and the consequences of holding onto those meanings during this crucial time period, may aid in the development of public policy and foreclosure procedures directly benefiting homeowners/borrowers who risk default. Future research might also extend the current study by examining consumer responses to other types of involuntary loss.

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INTRODUCTION

In this paper we report the findings from a preliminary study on Danish women’s consumption of baby clothes. The aim of the study is threefold: to provide insight into the possible ways in which motherhood identities are shaped and negotiated through conspicuous consumption, to show how this mode of consumption illustrates the relevance of Veblen’s theory of conspicuous consumption as inherently vicarious in nature, and last, to point to the use of mothers’ groups as a rich empirical source. These themes are highly interrelated, as should be evident in our presentation of the findings and the discussion below.

Within consumer research the topic of motherhood’s impact on consumption has not until recently received much attention. From a market perspective this may wonder, since the consumption of items for both pregnant women and their newborn babies represents an incredibly lucrative market. In the UK, for instance, the costs of raising a child to the age of five have been estimated to be £52,000 (Ward, 2005). A consumption category that we believe is particularly prone to provide insights into women’s attempts to create and maintain (new) identity positions in their role as mothers, is that of baby and children’s clothes.

In popular and trade press it is recently claimed that the market of infants clothing is changing towards what looks like an appropriation of the fashion discourse already established for adults and teens (Pennington 2005). A local example: the Copenhagen trade fair of baby- and children’s clothing, CiffKids, was until recently a small side show compared to the adult fashion fair, but only a few seasons back it exploded into a large venue in its own right with 180 companies displaying their designs (Jacobsen 2006). These trends are a signal that the consumption of parenting is a big and growing business, and perhaps also a sign that even mass consumption of infant wear is gradually becoming more symbolic in nature.

Consuming motherhood

From a more theoretical perspective, a deeper interest in motherhood and consumption is warranted because of the long established link between consumption and role transitions (Shout 1991), that is, consumption may be utilized as a resource for creating and maintaining new identities and positions (McCrank 1986; Kleine and Kleine 1999). Also within marketing literature it has been established that the periods of transition that occur within the family life-cycle, including that to parenthood, “may well be associated with major changes in consumption patterns” (Commuri and Gentry, 2000, p. 8). Belk (1988) claims that the middle years of a persons life are likely to “involve the most extended concept of self” (p.148) as this period involves parenting (among other factors), thus the consumption of mothers is also a very appropriate way of understanding how consumers may create extended concepts of self through their consumption, and in this case even through the consumption on the behalf of their children.

Cook claimed in 1995 that “virtually absent from research about women as consumers is an examination of women as consumers as mothers— in other words, women who consume on behalf of their children” (Cook, 1995, p. 505). A growing but fragmented body of research on the topic of motherhood and consumption has since emerged, and here we see contributions on the transition into motherhood (Fischer and Gainer 1993, Jennings and O’Malley 2003, Prothero 2002, Carrigan and Sczigin 2004, Thomsen & Sorensen 2006) as well as on the transition “out of motherhood”, that is, into the empty nest stage (Hogg al. 2003/2004, Curasi et al. 2001, Olsen 1999).

In their conceptual work, Davis et al (2006) argue that consumption plays a critical role in the enactment of motherhood, and that consumption issues and activities are of great everyday concern to the individual woman who seek to define her role and worth as a mother. These everyday activities are, however, under strong influence from e.g., political and socio-cultural factors (ibid). Thus, ideologies of motherhood—what makes a ‘good mother’ versus what makes a ‘bad mother’—seem to have a strong influence on the shaping of new mothers’ identities and their consumption. Davis et al (2006) also suggest that new mothers are particularly aware how they are perceived by others and that they are more inclined to attempt to portray themselves as good mothers—and underplay or hide when they do not live up to the perceived, ideal state of being the perfect mother.

Conspicuous consumption of motherhood

Several implications of the original concept of conspicuous consumption of Veblen (1925[1970]) are important in relation to the construction of motherhood identity, when we invoke a perspective of consumption. Originally, the concept of conspicuous consumption was thought to be of a vicarious nature: men of the leisure class consumed through their wife (she should be the “chief ornament”, ibid p. 126) who in turn consumed through others of the household (servants, children, friends etc.). In its most obtrusive form Veblen mentions the use of “spacious servant’s quarters”, but goes on to mention “[A]mother scarcely less obtrusive or less effective form of vicarious consumption, and a much more widely prevalent one, is the consumption of food, clothing, dwelling, and furniture by the lady...” (ibid p. 60).

In the Veblarian framework the function of the ‘good mother’ would be one that “in an especial degree put in evidence her household’s ability to pay” (ibid p. 126). This pecuniary definition of social stratification has often been criticised (Trigg 2001), as well as the ‘trickle down’ model of tastes attributed Veblen, but more importantly in this case, the ‘good mother’ is seemingly one who should ‘flash it if she’s got it’. The sole function of the woman (and her children) is to be her husbands ‘consumption proxy’. The anachronistic insults to the women of the world aside, what happens if the ‘consumption proxy’ herself becomes less of an ornament and a working woman? One hypothesis could be that the ‘good mother’ would choose to live out vicarious consumption on behalf of her children, even very young infants, as the prime strategy for negotiating a motherhood identity.

Symbolic consumption of baby fashion

In order to get a full grasp of the consumer behaviour of women trying to construct a motherhood identity through what is essentially a fashion discourse; the sociology of Veblen is too narrow. How mothers actually choose the right style, the right brands and appropriate the cultural meanings is likely to be as complex as the discourse they would have evoked for the consumption on their own behalf (Thompson & Haytko 1997). This explorative paper cannot go into depth with the complexity that might
prevail in these consumption practices (or whether these could best be described as ‘trickle-down’, ‘trickle across’ or ‘trickle around’ etc.), but what is being examined is rather the extend to which it may be taking place at all, and how this relates to the participating women’s construction of motherhood.

METHOD

The empirical design is qualitative group interviews of two pre-existing “mothers’ groups”. The interviews was recorded digitally and transcribed in verbatim.

In Denmark (and other Scandinavian countries) the public health care system offers to set up “mothers’ groups” to support the mothers in the time of their early motherhood, and most mothers choose to accept this offer, particularly if it is their first child. In the first year meetings are regular and often weekly or bi-weekly, and though most groups dissolve after a year or so of regular meetings, some women form long standing friendships with the mothers they meet in their mothers’ group.

The mothers’ groups are an important part of establishing and representing the ‘motherhood’ identity for the participating women, as the whole purpose of the groups are to develop and share the problems and progress of becoming a mother. The participation in mothers’ groups in the Danish society is the norm rather than a choice representing a specific value system, lifestyle or ideal of motherhood. The women found in these groups may therefore be seen as reasonably representative of Danish mothers.

The methodology involved in the interviews of mothers’ groups is quite similar to that of the focus group, as they were performed as very free thematic discussions. But there are a few important differences. The groups have met several times before and the initial ‘forming’ of the group could therefore be expected to have happened already in the past meetings. This could improve the probability of a relaxed and open atmosphere, as the participating women already know each other (if they did not feel comfortable in the group they would be likely to have left it before the time of the interview).

Importantly, the mothers’ groups are a perfect and natural setting for exploring the construction of motherhood and the related consumption patterns, as the whole point of the group meetings are for the mothers to learn and compare their identities as mothers.

On the other hand the relationships between the group members are expected to continue after the session and there may therefore be group dynamics (ie. ‘face-work’ etc. (Goffman, 1990)) that are even more important in these groups than in the very short term relations in focus groups with unacquainted informants that do not meet again. It could however, also be argued that these relations would imply greater involvement and commitment for the participants in the mothers’ groups than normal ‘anonymous’ participants in focus groups that may be more free to elaborate or speculate without the social pressure of commitment or consistency concerning the claims they make in the focus group. Not that the identity or claims made in the mothers’ groups could be said to be ‘the real truth’ on the participating mothers, but it is probably more consistent with the roles and identity that they live in their everyday lives.

The participants

As this paper is explorative in nature the sample of participating mothers is quite limited. In order to qualify the limitations of this, a brief outline of the conditions and setting follows.

The mothers’ groups were situated in a provincial setting, group A based in a large provincial city, group B in a small provincial village. All women were living in stable relationships.

The participating women must be said to belong to the middle class, though with some differences in household income (see fig. 1). Please note the Danish context: the incomes should be considered in relation to an economy of very high taxes and living expenses.

The group sessions

The sessions took place in the mothers’ homes, as would the usual meetings. This ensured a relaxed and productive atmosphere.

In the case of Group A, the mothers met without the children, (as the children were old enough to be left at home), and in the case of Group B, the meeting took place in the morning with the children present, but with an assistant looking after the children during the group session. Before the meeting the participants had filled out a questionnaire with details found in fig. 1.

The groups were presented with the themes and only gently probed. At the middle of the session the groups were presented with four ads, each representing different types of baby clothing: Mads & Mette (supermarket retail), H&M (inexpensive chain of clothing stores and mail order), Fransa (mid level clothing stores) and DKNY (global brand, upper level retail stores).

FINDINGS

The participating mothers only need the cue ‘baby wear’ to spark involved, elaborate discussions. They are eager to talk about it, they have opinions about it (which they are more than happy to share) and they have great knowledge about it; knowledge in the sense that they are familiar with a great number of brand names and stores, in which these brands can be purchased. They are also very much aware of what kind of, and how much clothing is in the drawers at home. They convey the impression that they, by heart, know colours, shapes and brands of all the clothing. But not only that, they also attribute cultural meanings to the brands and the styles, to the correct level of ‘styling’ and the socially legitimate way of combining generic un-branded pieces with expensive branded clothing. The overall finding, which is expanded below, is that baby clothing is a very important category of expressing the mothers’ identity, their ideal of motherhood, and also that this transition into a new mode of motherhood consumption is a very clear performance of vicarious consumption.

The Perfect Mother

In their own opinion their interest in baby clothing is a result of their overall dedication to their children. It is very clear that they are striving towards becoming the best mothers possible, and, in their (new) role as mothers, a primary goal in life has become to do what is best for their children. As one of the mothers states it:

"But it is very much this thing, that you want to do it as good as possible, you want to do the best, right!" [Tina]

By providing the children with nice clothing, the mothers’ express care for their children, and the mothers thereby experience themselves as good and caring mothers who show their children respect. It could be said to be a way of bonding between mother and child.

Conspicuous motherhood

However, providing the children with nice clothing is not just a matter between the mother and child, and not just about love and tender care. According to the mothers in the study, children’s clothing (and other goods around the child), plays an important role for the mother’s ascribed status in society. They suggest that as a mother you are perceived according to the appearance of their children. They express high awareness of what kind of clothing they put on their children, as well as of the clothing that other mothers put
on their children. This means, for the mothers in the study, that they are aiming to dress their children in clothing, which makes them appear like mothers, who take good care of their children.

*I guess, [...] that the way the children look, that is also often seen as how you are and how you function. I remember I saw this boy the other day. He was wearing a jacket that was all too big and all too thin, and it was perishing cold. I just thought I could see that there was no one who took care of him. I just think it signals, that he comes from a home with few reserves. And I think it is very much that thing I want to signal. That my child looks proper and that he has a good home. That means everything.* [Lise]

Subsequently, Lise also mentions that she finds it natural to be conscious of what other people may think of you. To her, this is valid not only in regards to her position as a mother, but in all aspects of life—and for all people.

Thus, the mothers in this study experience their own competence as mothers through the way they dress their children. This is perhaps not as surprising as the extend, to which the construction of motherhood identity is carried out through vicarious consumption, and also the degree to which these mothers are able to elaborate the meanings and rules that govern this mode of consumption.

**Consumption by proxy**

The women in the study claim that they no longer go shopping for clothes for themselves as much they used to. Instead shopping now revolves around the children. One of the mothers explains how she consciously has put aside her own needs in favour of her child’s, and that she does not se this change as a loss, on the contrary. She explains:

*What strikes me most, is, how much you more or less disregard yourself and your previous shopping habits in favour of the new shopping habits that you have acquired. [...] It is much greater to buy something nice for your child than for yourself. It is much more cheerful, and you don’t have the same need yourself as before.* [Annette]

It seems that the emotional gratifications connected with shopping for the child is much greater than what is achieved through shopping for herself. The ‘self-sacrifice’ of motherhood identity is clearly expressed in terms of ‘disregarding’ old patterns and needs, but very importantly, this mother do express positive feelings and experiences associated with her new vicarious mode of consumption.

In terms of children’s clothing, this means that the clothing has to be something the mothers can identify with more directly. New baby-designer brands (for example MOLO, Katvig) utilize this in careful styling of 70’s retro prints, allowing for nostalgic emotions as well as the symbolic expression of ‘cool’. Practically, this is seen in the fact that the children are being dressed in “adult” clothing, that is, “adult”, in the sense that it is styles and patterns, which the mothers (or their fathers) themselves could (and do) wear. The following quotes are examples of this tendency:

*Well, it is just so cool, that they can wear something that is a bit adult. It is the same thing about Amanda having a Brøndby [a premier league football team] shirt.* [Marianne]

*When you get those romper suits, you often get them from elderly people… when they had small children, that was what they would be wearing until they were one year old. But then I think… argh baby clothes! You should rather dress them up like a little adult.* [Tina]

The last quote implies that the consumption of baby clothing has changed since the grandparent generation. It could be that this is more than just a fashion cycle, and that the consumption on behalf of the very young infant has now been transformed from a basic, functional domain to a fully fledged symbolic mode of conspicuous, vicarious consumption.

The mothers do actually recognise a connection between the children’s wear and their own identity. They are conscious of the fact that they dress their children in clothing, which resembles adult styles, in order to send the right message on behalf of the mother. One of the mothers explains:
Well, he doesn’t care. He is probably just as fine right now as if I had put some sort of a track suit on him. I just feel that I am not myself a track suit girl, so therefore he is not wearing a track suit either. [Anette]

Furthermore, beyond regarding the children’s clothing as a channel for signalling their own identity and their own taste and preferences, the mothers in the study also explicitly reflect upon the idea that children may be part of a mothers’ extended self (Belk 1988). The following quotes are examples of how two of the mothers have made some thought of this:

Well, I don’t know if the children are some kind of extension of your self. They are in some sort of way. Sometimes you are like one person, or how you put it… [Lone]

Are the children not signalling your self? As long as they are small? [Tanja]

Being Perfect–But Not Flashing It

The mothers seem to put great effort into showing themselves and the world that they are good mothers. However, apparently there is a fine line between simply demonstrating that you are able to take good care of your children—and then flashing that you can. This distinction appears in the interviews. For example, one of the mothers presents the clothing, which her child was wearing on the particular day of the interview. She explains:

[He] is wearing a stripy shirt… from Freoli, or whatever it is called. Then he is wearing a pair of brown trousers… from My Tune, or whatever it is called. Yes, and then he is wearing a pair of shoes… yes, that’s what he is wearing. [Anette]

From this statement it is clear that the mother is very aware of her child’s clothing—she can name not only the patterns and colours but also the brands. However, her way of describing the clothing we find noticeable. She mentions the patterns and colours first and adds the brand, and then in the end, as a casual afterthought she ads “… or whatever it is called.” This addition is a marker of the mother’s insecurity, as she knows that she is not supposed to care that much; not supposed to know the brands by heart. It is however our strong impression, that this mother definitely knows, which brands she puts on her son. But by presenting the outfit like this, the mother does not flash that she dresses her child in high profile brands, which it actually is. In this way, consciously or not, she manages to present herself as a person who does not put too much thought into brands. She tries to make her conspicuous consumption look ‘not too conspicuous’!

Another example is some of the women’s description of mothers, who would dress their children in clothing from the brand: DKNY (Short for Donna Karan New York). The women in the study were shown an ad for DKNY children’s clothing (amongst three other ads—see above). In their accounts they explain that mothers, who dress their children in very conspicuous brands (like DKNY), probably do it because they are eager to flash that they can afford it and because they want to pass on the habit of wearing brand clothing. The following quote expresses this in a projective mode with some distance and sarcasm in the tone of voice:

[When talking about the type of mother who would buy DKNY for her child:] I would think, she would like to… you know, show that ‘I can afford to buy such clothes. I like to dress up my son in this. And I like to teach him those habits… that there can be some smart tag on it’ [Marianne]

In spite of the fact that these women have offered elaborate accounts on how much thought and effort they put into the clothing of their children and how important they find it to be seen as someone who are in surplus, they clearly distance themselves from those who send the same sort of signals in a way that is too obvious.

Mother’s Business

In spite of the fact that it is socially desirable in contemporary Western society to do parenting as partners, and maybe even more so in Scandinavia, it is striking how absent the fathers are in the women’s accounts of baby clothes consumption. Probed directly, all women in the two groups claim to have sole responsibility for the purchases of baby clothes in their households. This could be a natural consequence of the fact that most of the mothers in the sample are still on maternity leave and therefore have better time than their working husbands for taking care of household chores such as making sure that their babies are equipped with appropriate clothes. However, the interviewer’s expression of slight surprise about the women’s declared sole responsibility is met with great laughter—and no further comments. To us this laughter suggests that the very idea that the fathers could take part in the purchasing of baby clothes is seen as almost ridiculous and not really worth commenting on. In the accounts of the women, decisions and motivations regarding baby clothes are solely attributed to mothers. We find only one explicit reference to a father’s role in the dressing of the child:

I put out the clothes for [my husband] every morning… the clothes he is supposed to give her on. Otherwise he will just take the topmost trousers and the topmost shirt. [Tanja]

What Tanja says is that her husband is not competent enough to dress their daughter appropriately on his own hand. This disregard of the fathers suggests that the purchasing of children’s clothes and the dressing of the babies may be regarded a mother’s task; it is a field where mothers are to show—or prove—their competence not just at mothers but as—perfect mothers. And sadly for both fathers and mothers, this (albeit discursive) construction of motherhood is a very exclusive one; the mother takes it all. Perhaps because the mother knows she will be the one ‘punished’ for the potential ‘flaws’ or mishaps carried out by the father, as she still believes they will be ascribed to her, not the father.

DISCUSSION

The above themes that we have elicited from the interviews indicate that children’s clothing represents a field where mothers seek to show their worth and competence as mothers through the symbolic negotiations of conspicuous consumption. According to our interpretation of the accounts from the present study, fathers are more or less outmanoeuvred from this field, reduced to, at the most, order-executing child dressers. However, one should be wary of taking the account of absent fathers at face value, the actual consumption patterns and the fathers’ perceptions could be quite different (which is a pertinent idea for further research). What matters is that the construction of motherhood seems to be somewhat based on the (almost hostile) exclusion of the fathers.

The women are very much aware of the signals they send to the surroundings through the clothing of their children, in fact, to a very high degree, they seem to consume through their children. This we also recognise as vicarious consumption (Veblen 1970[1925]).
They seem to do so at the expense of consumption directed toward themselves, and some of them wonder how easy it is for them to do so, but in fact they are just reproducing images of ‘the good mother’, as she is presented in Western culture: “identifyable by her self-sacrifice, her capacity to nurture, and her possession of moral goodness” (McDonagh 1999, p.228).

So when these mothers cut their own consumption of clothes in favour of clothes for their children, they simply reproduce a cultural ideal, but at the same time they are able to construct and negotiate their new motherhood identity through conspicuous consumption. A mode of consumption and identity construction that they are used to perform on their own behalf, perhaps as a more hedonic motive, now becomes even more gratifying as it becomes legitimized as vicarious consumption and enshrouded with the moral goodness of motherhood self-sacrifice.

To spend time and effort on the child’s clothes is a very visible way to identify the self in the role as a mother. ‘Vicarious consumption’ is a natural response to this ideal. However, to retain the aura of moral goodness and good taste, it is pertinent that the conspicuous consumption of motherhood is performed in a suitable manner, so that it becomes ‘not too conspicuous’…

**REFERENCES**


Emotions of Fear, Guilt or Shame in Anti-Alcohol Messages: Measuring Direct Effects on Persuasion and the Moderating Role of Sensation Seeking

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ABSTRACT

We study the effects of fear, shame and guilt on persuasiveness of anti-alcohol messages among young people. We experimentally test three distinct messages, each one focusing on one of the three negative emotions using a total sample of more than a thousand students. Results show that all three messages have a positive impact on persuasion and that the stimulation of shame is very effective in the case of anti-alcohol abuse advertising directed at young people. We demonstrate that sensation seeking moderates the impact of negative emotions on persuasion in the case of fear and shame appeals.

INTRODUCTION

Messages using fear appeals has been used in a variety of domains as road safety, prevention of drug, tobacco and alcohol abuse or prevention of AIDS. Since the pioneering study of Janis and Feshbach (1953) concerning dental hygiene, research on persuasion through fear appeals have lead to the contrasting results, revealing either strong positive effects (Arthur and Quester 2004; Bennett 1996) or little or no effects (Krisher, Darley, and Darley 1973; Schoenbachler and Whittler 1996) on persuasion. However, fear is not the only emotion generating stress. Other negative emotions as guilt or shame are used in marketing communications in different domains as politics, consumption or public health. Interestingly, research concerning the effects of these emotions remains scarce and results are mixed. For example, Lazarus (1991) proposes that shame favors pro-social behavior and leads to conformity to social standards, as Bennett (1998) believes in an adaptive role of guilt and shows that guilt-oriented messages may lead to persuasion if shame is not activated. Also, recent research has focused on the social dimension of threat, whereby a social threat ties the dangerousness of the individual behavior to a rejection by the social group (Gallopol 2006, Laroche et al. 2001).

The objective of this research is to demonstrate that a variety of negative emotions (i.e. fear but also shame and guilt) may have a positive impact on persuasion and may moderate this relationship.

We focus on the use of negative emotions appeals (fear, guilt and shame) in the case of advertising targeting an audience of young adults and directed towards prevention of physical and psychosocial risks linked to alcohol abuse. In spite of limited beneficial effects when consumed very moderately, alcohol consumption is a major public health issue in many countries. Developing behaviors such as “binge drinking” or the mixing of alcohol to other psychoactive substances constitute aggravating risks especially for young populations.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESIS

Several studies have shown that, in the context fear appeals, the stronger the perception of threat, the higher the activation of fear (Block and Keller 1995; LaTour and Pitts 1989). Therefore:

\[ H1a: \text{In the case of fear appeals, the perception of the severity of the threat has a positive impact on the level of activation of fear emotion.} \]

\[ H2a: \text{In the case of fear appeals, the perception of the susceptibility to the threat has a positive impact on the level of activation of fear emotion.} \]

It is established that the cognitive processes at work for the evaluation of the threat are at the origin of negative emotions (Lazarus 1991). Although guilt is a public emotion linked to individual conscience and shame is a public emotion linked to exposure to others (Tangney 1995), research shows that it is difficult to distinguish between shame and guilt. Both are considered being self-conscious emotions (Lewin 1993) and they both imply an self-evaluative process. As guilt, shame is a useful emotion which reminds of social norms. It implies adaptive behaviors since it motivates the individual to respect internal ideals (Lazarus 1991) and to conform to social ideals (Sheff 1988). Therefore, we propose that the relationships between constructs formulated in hypotheses H1a and H1b in the case of fear appeals, also apply to guilt and shame appeals. Hence:

\[ H1b, c: \text{In the case of guilt (shame) appeals, the perception of the severity of the threat has a positive impact on the level of activation of guilt (shame) emotion.}\]

\[ H2b, c: \text{In the case of guilt (shame) appeals, the perceptions of the susceptibility to the threat have a positive impact on the level of activation of guilt (shame) emotion.}\]

In order to avoid defensive reactions after exposition to threatening messages possibly leading to minimization or ignorance of the problem, a solution must be offered to the viewer. The presentation of this solution enables dealing with the threat presented in the message (Willte 1992). Also, self-efficacy or the belief that the individual is in a position to implement the recommended solution influences the adoption of the solution (Block and Keller 1997; Snipes, LaTour, and Bliss 1999). Therefore:

\[ H3: \text{For highly threatening messages, perceived efficacy of the recommended solution has a positive impact on persuasion.} \]

\[ H4: \text{For highly threatening messages, perceived ability to adopt the recommended solution has a positive impact on persuasion.} \]
Also, fear facilitates the persuasion process because it attracts attention and develops memorization of the message (Rogers 1983). Hence:

\[ H5a: \text{In the case of fear appeals, the intensity of fear activated by the message has a positive impact on persuasion.} \]

By contrast, research devoted to the study of effects of messages containing guilt or shame appeals are scarce. Bennett (1998) stipulates a positive effect of guilt and a negative effect of shame on persuasion. However, Tangney (1999) suggests that both emotions impact behaviors of reparation and cooperation and favor empathy. We therefore propose:

\[ H5b, c: \text{In the case of guilt (shame) appeals, the intensity of guilt (shame) activated by the message has a positive impact on persuasion.} \]

Individual variables have been included in models linking negative emotions to persuasion and explain some contrasting results. For example, high self-esteem individuals, when confronted to threatening information concerning alcohol abuse, will try to minimize their perceptions of the severity and the susceptibility to the threat (Gerrard et al. 2000). Following this finding, we propose:

\[ H6: \text{In the context of a threatening message, the intensity of self-esteem has a negative impact on the level of perceived threat.} \]

\[ H7: \text{In the context of a threatening message, the intensity of self-esteem has a negative impact on the level of perceived susceptibility to the threat.} \]

Schaninger and Sciglimpaglia (1981) suggest that an individual’s self-esteem has a significant impact on responses to emotional messages because self-esteem influences his or her confidence in decision making. Hence:

\[ H8: \text{In the context of a threatening message, the intensity of self-esteem has a positive impact on the level of perceived self-efficacy.} \]

Aaker and Stayman (1989) show that some individuals exposed to emotionally intense messages have a tendency to react to their emotions with a high intensity level. This individual characteristic is named affect intensity (Larsen 1984). Moore, Harris, and Chen (1995) demonstrate that individuals with high affect intensity, compared to individuals with low scores of affect intensity, exhibit intense emotional responses to emotional ads. Since negative emotions develop with perceptions of threat intensity and susceptibility to the threat, we propose:

\[ H9: \text{In the context of a threatening message, the magnitude of affect intensity has a positive impact on perceived severity of the threat.} \]

\[ H10: \text{In the context of a threatening message, the magnitude of affect intensity has a positive impact on perceived susceptibility to the threat.} \]

Sensation seeking is a biological trait best described as the pursuit of novel, intense and complex sensations and experiences, and the willingness to take risks for the sake of such experience (Zuckerman 1994). When a difference exists between present and ideal levels of stimulation, the individual feels a need for or an excess of stimulation which leads to the search of activities enabling the stimulation level to approach the optimum. Palmgreen et al. (2003) recommend the use of preventive messages with high sensation value for targets in need of sensations because these individuals search for new, complex, ambiguous and emotionally intense stimuli. Also, Donohew et al. (1990) demonstrate that individuals looking for strong sensations (High Sensation Seekers) show higher levels of attitudinal and behavioral persuasion against drug abuse if exposed to messages communicating strong sensations (e.g. highly emotional messages). We therefore propose that sensation seeking moderates the impact of negative emotions on persuasion.

\[ H11a, b, c: \text{In the case of fear (guilt, shame) appeals, intensity of sensation-seeking positively impacts the relationship between the level of fear (guilt, shame) activated by the message and the level of persuasion.} \]

The conceptual model we propose is given in figure 1 and shows all relationships among constructs developed in the set of hypotheses.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In a large number of countries, important problems linked to alcohol abuse are linked to social consumption of non-dependent drinkers, mainly young adults. Since we study the effects of fear, guilt and shame appeals within the context of alcohol abuse, our sample is composed of young adults aged between 18 and 25.

**Stimuli:** Four advertising messages were created (see figure 2), one for the fear and one for the guilt scenarios and two for the shame scenario (one for each gender). The ads created aimed at generating perceptions of severe threat, high susceptibility to threat, efficacy of the solution and high self efficacy (Witte 1992).

**Measurements:** We measured responses for all items on a seven-point Likert type scale. Measurements of threat perceived severity, threat perceived susceptibility, perceived response efficacy, and perceived self-efficacy are adapted from Witte (1992). The emotion of fear is measured through five items adapted from Block and Keller (1995) and Laroche et al. (2001). Guilt is measured through three items adapted from Cotte, Coulter, and Moore (2005) and Izard (1977) and shame is measured through four items adapted from Rolland and De Fruyt (2003). Other measurements were drawn from existing scales: persuasion (Block and Keller 1997), self-esteem (Rosenberg 1965) from which we eliminated reverse items, affect intensity (second dimension of the Geuens and De Pelsmacker’s 2002 scale which corresponds to negative emotions), and sensation seeking (Zuckerman et al. 1964).

**Sample and preliminary tests:** An on-line questionnaire was answered by students belonging to different French universities. We collected 1082 usable questionnaires (391, 401 and 290 respectively for the fear, the guilt and the shame scenarios). We verified scale unidimensionality through exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. We verified convergent and discriminant validities of the scales as well as reliability (see Table 1). Concerning sensation-seeking, results of the analysis indicate a two-dimensional factor.

1Following Wong and al’s (2003) recommendation.
2Reduced scale from the «Affect Intensity Scale» (AIM) by Larsen (1984).
3Results of the CFA shown in appendix B have been obtained after a bootstrap (1000 iterations) to deal with problems of normality.
FIGURE 1
Conceptual model and hypotheses

TABLE 1
Reliability and validity of measurement scales

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</table>

* Non significant correlations
** One-item Measure
*** Values below diagonal represent the shared variance between variables
Manipulation of emotions was satisfactory since levels of fear, guilt and shame are higher for each corresponding scenario. Also, within each scenario, we found that (1) the fear scenario leads to more fear than guilt or shame, (2) the guilt scenario leads to more guilt than either fear or shame and (3) the shame scenario implies more shame than fear or guilt.
RESEARCH RESULTS

Estimation of Direct effects

To uncover differences between the three emotional situations (fear, guilt, and shame), we used a structural multi-group approach. We compared a model with free structural parameters to a model in which structural parameters were constrained to 1. We found a significant difference ($\Delta \chi^2(32) = 119.59, p < .001$) and must therefore identify the structural parameters that differ across conditions. We compared the $\chi^2$ of the free models, constrained models, and pair-wise constrained models. These comparisons were done for each structural relation in the model. The rule followed is that the best model is the most constrained one in case of non-significant difference and the least constrained model otherwise. The models retained furnish estimates for each structural parameter and for each scenario (see figure 3).

Results show, for all scenarios, that affect intensity has a positive impact on perceived severity of the threat (in support of H9) and perceived susceptibility to the threat (in support of H10). The higher the perceived efficacy of the solution, the higher the persuasion level (H3 is supported). Similarly, perceived self-efficacy has a positive impact on persuasion (in support of H4).

Concerning self-esteem, we did not find any significant effect of the construct on perceived susceptibility to the threat (H7 is rejected), nor on perceived self-efficacy (H8 rejected). Self-esteem does not impact perceived severity of the threat within the shame scenario. For the fear and the guilt scenarios, self-esteem has a positive influence on perceived severity which contradicts hypothesis 6 (H6 is rejected).

In the case of the fear scenario, perceived severity of and susceptibility to the threat has an impact on the level of fear activated. (H1a and H2a supported) and fear has a positive impact on persuasion (in support of H5a). Consequently, fear is a mediator between perceptions of the threat and persuasion. By contrast, for this scenario, relations concerning guilt and shame are non-significant. It may be that the perceptions of threat (severity and susceptibility) do not translate into sufficient shame or guilt to influence persuasion.

In the case of the guilt scenario, perceived threat susceptibility has a positive impact on fear and guilt only (H1b supported). However, perceived susceptibility to the threat does not influence fear, shame or guilt (H2b is rejected), but guilt does have a positive impact on persuasion (in support of H5b). This might be explained by the significant impact of perceived severity on guilt (H1b). Moreover, the significant impact of fear on persuasion can be linked to a significant effect of perceived severity on fear which may compensate the lack of impact of susceptibility on fear. This indicates that the guilt scenario might imply fear as well as guilt. Individuals might have been frightened to feel guilty (Ghingold 1981) and emotions of fear and guilt might overlap. As hypothesized, guilt has a significant impact on persuasion (H5b supported). Since perceptions of threat do not imply shame in this scenario, shame does not impact persuasion.

In the case of the shame scenario, perceptions of severity and susceptibility to the threat have an impact on shame (H1c and H2c supported) which, in turn, has an impact on persuasion (in support of H5c). Perceptions of the severity of the threat imply fear and perceived susceptibility imply guilt. Both of these effects explain the impacts of fear and guilt on persuasion (all results are summarized in Figure 3).

Estimation of the moderating effect of sensation-seeking

In order to test this moderating effect, we partition each group (exposed to either fear, shame or guilt ads) into three sub-groups of approximately equal sizes (with high, medium and low levels of “thrill-seeking” or “experience-seeking”). We then contrast results for the high vs. low sensation-seeking groups and test the moderating impact of both thrill-seeking and experience-seeking through multi-group analysis. Considering the exploratory nature of the moderation hypotheses and the limited size of the samples (for each sub-group), we focus on the analysis of the potential differences across sub-groups. Results (see Figure 4) demonstrate that the sensation-seeking moderates the impact of negative emotions on persuasion when fear appeals are used. Therefore, hypothesis H11a is supported. In the case of the use of shame appeal, there is a partial moderating effect of sensation-seeking, since moderation is not found for one of the six tested relationships (no effect of experience-seeking on the impact of shame on persuasion) and hypothesis H11c is therefore partially supported. In the case of guilt appeals, H11b is rejected since a moderating effect of sensation-seeking is found for only one out of six relationships.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Overall, our findings confirm the role of fear in messages for prevention against alcohol abuse and also demonstrate the impact of other emotions (fear and guilt) on persuasion, which might help advertisers in their search of persuasive strategies.

We demonstrate, for all scenarios, the influence of affect intensity on both perceived severity of and perceived susceptibility to the threat. This confirms results from Moore, Harris, and Chen (1994) showing that cognitive responses (perceptions of threat) mediate the relationships between affect intensity and emotional responses. Even if the impact of perceived susceptibility on guilt is non-significant (for the guilt scenario), the negative emotions that we studied seem to play a mediating role between perceptions of the threat and persuasion. This confirms the importance of negative emotions and the fact that a threat leads to negative emotions (fear, guilt, shame) which themselves determine behavior (Arthur and Quester 2004).

Results also confirm the importance of perceptions of efficacy which lead to the acceptance of the message and to persuasion. Many authors having dealt with fear have already demonstrated that importance of perceived efficacy (Block and Keller 1997; Hale and Dillard 1995; Witte 1992).

In the case of the shame scenario, persuasion occurs because the three emotions studied here are activated. This confirms the proposition of Lazarus (1991) concerning the role of shame. Shame motives a social behavior and leads to conformity to social norm. Contrarily to Bennett (1998) who proposes that guilt messages may be persuasive if shame is not activated, our results...
FIGURE 3
Results of hypotheses testing
show that a threatening message implying fear, guilt and shame together might well be the most persuasive.

Overall, sensation-seeking moderates the impact of negative emotions on persuasion. This is an empirical validation of research hypotheses stipulating that individuals looking for strong sensations are more influenced by messages with a high emotional content (Palmgreen et al. 2003). However, our results contradict those obtained by Schoenbachler and Whittler (1996). It is therefore important that further research refines methodologies and furnishes additional support for our hypotheses.

This research contributes to the persuasion literature with the proposition and test of a model including constructs often tested separately. It enables better understanding the mechanisms through which the stimulation of negative emotions may convince individuals to abandon risky behaviors. Also, this work leads to the validation of the cognitive evaluation model for emotions (Lazarus 1991) which stipulates that a cognitive evaluation of the threat is at the origin of negative emotions. From a practical standpoint, it seems that the shame scenario was the most persuasive and that it enabled generation of all studied emotions. It is probably in that direction that advertising and creative strategies need to be developed to fight against substance abuse for young people.

Of course, this research suffers from limitations, one of which being that emotions have been measured through questionnaires which may lead to an overestimation of the emotional states and to a difficulty for respondents to express their affective state (Derbaix and Poncin 2005). The expansion of this research to other populations and the use of other measurement instruments are highly recommended. Beyond sensation-seeking, other individual variables might have an impact on the relationship between negative emotions and persuasion such as risk aversion, authoritarianism or introversion. Finally, we recommend further developments concerning the use and impact of guilt and shame appeals in public sector communications and particularly in ads directed at prevention of substance abuse or promotion of health-related behaviors.

**REFERENCES**


Guilt Decreasing Marketing Communication: An Unexplored Appeal
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

1. Purpose of the research

In spite of the presence of inconsistent findings in the marketing literature concerning guilt, practitioners around the world have continued to use it as a communication appeal (Huhmann and Brotherton, 1997).

Marketing literature demonstrated that guilt as a distinct emotion can be aroused by advertising. Nevertheless, the capacity of guilt appeal to decrease guilt was neglected by marketing scholars and the aim of this research is to assess the role of the guilt decreasing appeal in reducing anticipated guilt.

2. Theoretical framework

In consumer behavior, only two studies in recent years could be found that examined this particular negative emotion (Burnett and Lunsford, 1994; Dahl et al, 2003). With respect to Dahl et al. observations in (2003) and Burnett and Lunsford (1994), we might note that consumers feel guilty for actions (i.e. spending money for unneeded goods) as well as for inactions (i.e. not donating money to a charity).

In the former case, marketing managers may communicate to the market using guilt arousing appeals to induce the target to act in a certain way. In the latter case, a potential customer may feel anticipated guilt when he/she is considering the possibility, for example, to buy an unneeded good (i.e. a very expensive watch). With respect to this guilt inducing circumstance, marketing managers may be interested in decreasing guilt felt by potential customers.

Thus, both guilt arousing and decreasing appeals may be carried out by marketers in the course of stimulating demand. Will both of these appeals work?

Some researchers have tried to answer the above questions (Bozinoff and Ghingold, 1983; Coulter and Pinto, 1995; Bennett, 1998; Cotte, Coulter and Moore, 2005).

The above mentioned studies of guilt appeals focused exclusively on guilt arousing appeal. Moreover, with a few exceptions (see Coulter and Pinto, 1995), they were conducted only in the contexts of nonprofit organizations. Guilt decreasing appeals, namely the capacity of advertising to depress and even extinguish consumer anticipated guilt, have been totally ignored by marketing literature.

According to Ghingold (1980) dissonance theory can be used to help explain how guilt functions in decision making.

Dissonance occurs when two or more cognitions conflict, contradict each other, or in some way clash (Festinger, 1957). As originally conceived by Festinger (1957), thoughts and opinions are generally linked in a consistent way. When inconsistencies occur between thoughts, people typically feel psychological discomfort, which Festinger (1957) termed dissonance. Since guilt is defined as a violation (or potential violation) of a norm, we might think of guilt as a form of cognitive dissonance: one’s desire for a product will be “inconsistent” with thoughts about negative consequences or nos

iousness associated with a purchase. According to Festinger (1957), when a person experiences feelings of dissonance, he/she attempts to avoid situations that might increase the dissonance or seeks to reduce the negative inconsistencies. The first strategy is to make plans regarding future actions, like not to give in to a temptation.

The second one is to look for justifications for future guilty actions. With respect to the latter possibility of dissonance reduction, advertising may meet the requirement of the receivers to find a ready and persuasive justification for committing the transgression. We expect that this ready excuse may reduce consumers’ guilt:

H1: Ads that include justifications for purchasing a guilt laden product (versus ads that do not) will reduce anticipated guilt.

Moreover, it is desirable that manipulations of justifications for making a purchase that aim to reduce anticipated guilt do not at the same time depress positive emotions associated with an advertised brand. According to the psychology literature, typical consumption situation are characterized by this inverse correlation, namely when consumption guilt decreases, positive emotions are likely to increase. Therefore,

H2: The more successful ad is in depressing anticipated guilt, the more successful it will be in increasing positive emotions.

Finally, according to Holbrook and Batra (1987) there is a negative association between guilt and attitude toward the advertisement. In concert with these findings, we expect that, to the extent that anticipated guilt is depressed, attitude toward the ad will be enhanced. Thus,

H3: The more successful an ad is in depressing anticipated guilt, the more successful it is in enhancing attitude toward a ad.

3. Method

A two independent group mixed design was used to manipulate type of advertisement (guilt reducing versus neutral), and happiness, guilt, and attitude toward advertising were measured variables. With respect to the aforementioned hypotheses, the independent variables are thus the format of advertising (guilt reducing versus neutral), the pre-exposure happiness and guilt felt by participants. The dependent variables are the post-exposure happiness and guilt experienced by respondents and their attitude toward the advertisements. 288 participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions in which they were exposed to a guilt decreasing or neutral print ad. Information was analyzed from 226 completed surveys.

4. Results

In order to test the first hypothesis, we built a repeated measure design with guilt as a within-subject variable and the type of group as a between-subjects variable. The results revealed a significant effect of the exposure to advertisement on guilt (F(1,000, 222,000) =84.06, p<.001) which shows higher guilt before the exposure to advertisement (M=2.43 for the neutral ad and M=2.56 for the guilt decreasing ad) than after the exposure of advertisement (M=2.29 for the neutral ad an M=1.99 for the guilt decreasing ad). Moreover, findings indicated that there was a significant interaction between
the level of guilt felt by participants and the type of communication appeal used (neutral vs. guilt decreasing): $F(1.000, 222.000)=31.50$, $p<.001$. Thus, the findings support the first hypothesis.

In order to test the second hypothesis, we built a repeated measure design with mild happiness as a within-subject variable and the type of group as a between-subjects variable. Participants of both groups, control and experimental, increased their level of mild happiness after the exposure of the advertisement but the means are not significantly different: $F (1,224.000)=1.62$, $p=.20$. We obtain similar results referring to the intense happiness. The findings do not support the second hypothesis.

In order to test the third hypothesis, we run two linear regressions: in the first one the dependent variable is attitude toward the ad and the independent variable was the guilt felt after the exposure to the ad. Results show that the level of guilt felt by participants after the exposure to the ad seems to influence their attitude toward the ad. Thus, the guilt decreasing appeal may be effective in determine a positive attitude toward the marketing communication.

5. Discussion

Findings demonstrate the efficacy of the decreasing guilt appeal in reducing the amount of anticipated guilt that a customer feels when he/she is considering purchasing a product. Such messages apparently provide consumers with excuses to buy seemingly guilt-ridden products. Moreover, our findings showed that the guilt decreasing appeal does not decrease positive emotions associated with the advertised product. Thus this appeal does not compromise the hedonic component of a guilty pleasure and meets the needs of marketer and consumer alike.

6. References


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Although the broader literature has demonstrated the undeniable impact of guilt on behavior (e.g., Baumeister et al. 1994; Izard 1977; Tangney 1995; Tangney and Deering 2003), consumer and marketing researchers have overlooked the role of this emotion in marketplace dynamics. The literature to date focused largely on guilt appeals in advertising (e.g., Bozinoff and Ghinglod, 1983; Huhman and Brotherton 1997) and marketing persuasion (Kivetz and Simonson, 2002; Strahilevitz and Myers, 1998; Sugarman, 1999). Recent works suggest an interest in the implications of guilt, without recourse to advertising analysis (e.g., Dahl et al. 2003; 2005; Strahilevitz, 1999). In the marketing context, Burnett and Lunsford (1994) offered the only typology of guilt with direct reference to consumer behavior. They suggested four types of guilt: financial, moral, health and social responsibility. Pioneering as it is in defining guilt in consumption, Burnett and Lunsford’s (1994) typology inadequately explains the spectrum of guilt in the consumer experience by restricting their analysis of consumption to purchasing and ingesting. Certainly, the stages of consumption are more complex. Except for a few studies (e.g., Burnett and Lunsford 1994), the body of work on consumer guilt assumes that it is constituted similarly to other forms of guilt. Given that researchers tend to define guilt in accordance with the objectives of their studies (Kugler and Jones 1992), this assumption may be erroneous. It is important, therefore, to develop a grounded understanding of guilt that relates specifically to consumption.

We draw on consumer collages to develop an emic perspective of consumer guilt and related actions. The primary research questions underlying the study included: What is the character of consumer guilt? Where does this guilt originate, and what effect does it have on consumers? Our objective in this study was to derive a grounded phenomenological and textured view of guilt that extends beyond the narrow confines of Burnett and Lunsford’s view of consumer behavior. We do so through a projective exercise that explored consumer expressions of guilt through collages. The graphic medium of the collage provided informants with an unconventional means of articulating their experiences, and thus revealed that the various types of guilt can be both concurrent and integrated.

Analysis of the collages demonstrates that guilt is a deep-seated emotion that manifests itself in diverse and interrelated ways in everyday life. Guilt is represented as a multidimensional emotion that results from one’s violation of an internally held value or belief. Informants’ collages affirmed this definition, and their use of images revealed the emotion’s texture. This definition is consonant with our observation that the dimensions of guilt are constituted in a manner whereby their co-presence is necessary to create a condition of guilt. Consumer perspectives of guilt were represented not only in their literal renderings (for example, “I feel guilty about eating cake, here is a picture of cake”), but also in symbolic and metaphorical forms. Therefore, our use of the collages highlights the richness of the visual data not only for the self-explanatory messages that are conveyed but also for the secondary information that it communicates (O’Barr 1994; Schroeder 1998).

A powerful view of guilt to emerge from the collages was that it is a “destroyer of the soul” that renders the consumer experiencing the emotion into one who is “stuck in reverse”, helplessly sinking to a point of no return. It is an unnecessarily heavy weight that forces its bearer to struggle under the load. This burden of guilt was particularly represented by pictures of Atlas with the world on his shoulders. The dominant view of guilt as having a negative impact on the consumer experiencing it is a pervasive undercurrent in the collages.

This work contributes to the marketing literature on guilt in three ways. First and foremost, analysis of the collage exercise highlights the interconnected nature of guilt and the complexity of guilt as a consumption-related emotion that has been unexamined in the literature to date. In asking consumers to work in a richly expressive medium, the interrelatedness of the many sources and types of guilt emerged as an important theme. Indeed, a single purchase could simultaneously arouse multiple forms of guilt. For example, buying a new Sport Utility Vehicle could produce guilt in the form of financial guilt (considering the cost of a significant purchase), and social responsibility guilt (selecting a vehicle that is not fuel efficient). Focusing on each of these forms of guilt in isolation does the phenomenon a disservice, reducing a multimodal aspect of consumption to a one-dimensional construct.

Second, we have identified an aesthetic quality to guilt as represented through both color and posture that has been unidentified in the literature to date. In addition to moving beyond the extant literature, which has focused on specific relationships in the consumption process, we have demonstrated the aesthetic nature of guilt and have revealed remarkable visual and metaphorical consistency across consumers in the darkness associated with guilt. Further, there are corporeal manifestations of guilt that convey its interrelatedness to sadness and despair.

Third and finally, our visual exploration reveals the implications that guilt has for consumers in all stages of the consumption cycle. Our holistic vision of consumer guilt expands into other stages of the consumption cycle, from pre-purchase anticipatory guilt to the consumptive activities that often are involved in guilt-motivated reparation or reconciliation. We believe that the identification of these new areas of guilt as an emotion will lead to increased attention to this under-explored phenomenon.

References


SPECIAL SESSION SUMMARY
The Evocative Power of Things: Materiality, Temporality and Value in the Consumption of Used Objects
Liz Parsons, Keele University, UK

SESSION OVERVIEW
The purpose of this session is to contribute to existing calls for a ‘thingly, or material turn’ in consumer research where theorists are concerned to explore more fully the material dimensions of markets (Borgerson 2005, Dant 2005, Miller 2005). We discuss in particular the ways in which used objects can evoke, and give material form to, the abstract ideas of history and heritage but also, on a more intimate level, prompt nostalgic wonderings around their biographies and past uses. We argue that such wonderings play a central part in the creation of an object’s value, one not embraced in more traditional framings of consumption stemming from a consideration of new goods. Thus we advance the study of alternative modalities of value in consumer research.

We find that a discussion of used objects highlights two interconnected themes that have arguably been neglected in consumer research to date, those of materiality and history (or temporality). Consumer researchers have explored the temporality of consumption experiences, see for example work on nostalgia (Goulding 2002, Holak and Havlena 1992, Holbrook 1993 Rindfleisch et al 2000) retroscapes and retrobranding (Brown et al 2003, Brown and Sherry 2003) but not much work as yet has focused squarely on the biographies, histories and temporalities of the objects themselves as a central determinant of the value creation process (although see Belk 1990). Indeed Arnould and Thompson (2005) in their commentary on the state of work on consumer culture theory suggest we need to understand the role of history and temporality more fully in directing the consumption process. In addition, while the role material objects play in meeting needs, wants and desires, and their centrality as resources for identity construction, has been discussed by consumer researchers in depth (i.e. Belk 1988), much less attention has been paid to matter and materiality. In particular the agency we might afford the more-than-human world of objects, or in Borgerson’s words objects’ ‘non-intentional capacity to facilitate alteration’ (2005: 440). Thus through an exploration of used objects this session makes attempts to centre the object more fully in debates over consumption meanings, viewing the subject-object relationship as dynamic, and market meanings as co-produced.

Used objects are in their second, third, fourth etc cycle of use which means they have ‘sets of histories’ or ‘cultural biographies’ (Appadurai 1986, Kopytov 1986) which may add to their value. Such histories are negotiated in a number of ways by both buyers and sellers. Parsons’ paper in this session, through a focus on the social and material dimensions of antique dealing, foregrounds the importance of provenance in the process of value creation. She discusses the way in which dealers manipulate the histories of goods through the devices of narrative and presentation in order to add to their value. Equally Ottes and Maclaran find that much of the value that owners attach to memorabilia is linked to the reflections of specific biographies and histories it allows. They find that objects form an important constituent part of a wider project of heritage (re)construction.

Borgerson and Schroeder’s paper focuses on the consumption of second-hand books and finds that much of the ‘pleasure of used texts’ stems from reflections around their histories and past uses, evidence of which lies in the ‘marginalia’ or written scribblings in the margins. Parsons also finds that the surface scratches and signs of use and wear in antique furniture represent a source of their beauty. In both cases these marks of agedness and use form a central part of these objects charm and attraction and as such offer an implicit critique of the notion that ‘new’ and ‘untouched’ form the boundaries of consumer desire.

LONG ABSTRACTS
“The Pleasures of the Used Text: Buying, Selling and Savouring Collectible Books”
Janet L. Borgerson, University of Exeter, UK
Jonathan E. Schroeder, University of Exeter, UK

The popular value of used books reveals insights into the material pleasures of consumption. Focusing on a collectible book genre, we explore how material practices, such as collecting, gift giving, and inscribing, create meaning for consumers. We analyze the materiality of these used texts, including ‘inscriptions’ and previous owner’s marginalia—written annotations, marks, and notes left in the pages—and discuss responses from eBay vendors selling Peter Pauper Press books—small, attractive gift books from the 1950s and 60s. We explore the aesthetic and temporal dimensions of books via three key aspects of their appeal: 1) marginalia; 2) collectibility; and 3) material pleasures.

The used market has expanded tremendously in the wake of the World Wide Web—auction sites like eBay, Amazon.com books’ strategic alliances with independent retailers, used bookstores and private sellers all contribute to a global exchange of second hand books. Used books have become a major revenue stream for charities such as Oxfam in the UK via its high street retail shops. Furthermore, books form major gifts to libraries, archives, and public collections; auction houses such as Christie’s, Sotheby’s and Swann routinely offer rare books at auction. Peter Pauper Press books have several distinguished library collections devoted to them. For example, Georgetown University Library’s Special Collections (2006) highlights the publisher as one of its strengths, and the University of San Francisco’s Donohue Rare Book room (2004) held a Peter Pauper Press exhibition in 2004.

Consumption traces alter objects, marking them with sacred, and sometimes economic value. Marginalia—banished by booksellers, expunged from electronic databases, and erased by efficient indexing—animates used books, offering nostalgic narratives of everyday lives. What some consumers value, the efficient market often eliminates, pointing to a paradox of online booksellers’ focus on ‘clean’ or ‘tight’ books, free from inscriptions and marks. Economist and philosopher Georges Bataille (1989) might recognize marginalia and inscriptions as excess value, excluded by the unreflective operations of the mainstream market, yet contributing to an overall productive environment in a mode that is wasted (e.g., Borgerson and Rehn 2004).

Valuing Inscriptions and Marginalia
Collectors often treasure marked pages, and researchers find shadowy scribblings provide unobtrusive data about past owners and previous eras (cf. Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, Sechrest and Grove 1981). This excess—gingerbread recipe notes preserved in The Melting Pot Cookbook, a scholar’s scribbled comments on an
influential tome, ancestral names written in the family Bible—defies assumptions that ‘clean’ and ‘new’ determine the borders of consumer desire. These traces of consumption offer insights into the pleasures of the used text, demonstrating how consumers, collectors and curators create meaning within an aesthetic economy of books.

However, eBay vendors appear to believe that a book must be as close to untouched as possible, that any distinguishing feature, whether sudden reader revelations or judgements noted in margins, are unwelcome and devaluing. These margin marks personalize books, reminding the reader which recipe went well or jogging the memory about what joke worked when. Throughout our copy of the *ABC of Cocktails* we found a running record of dates, golf scores, and drink notes. Furthermore, an author’s signature may enhance a book’s collectibility, and if a legendary writer marks a text, then every sketch and scribble becomes significant.

**Collectibility**

What makes books worth collecting? We contacted ten online booksellers offering Peter Pauper Press books during October 2004. Five eBay merchants responded regarding the positioning of and interest in collecting these books. One informant focused on the apparent collectibility of Peter Pauper Press: ‘I purchased this book at an estate sale because I thought it looked like a book someone might collect. I don’t even know the date it was printed’. In a follow-up question, we asked her to elaborate: ‘I was attracted to the book because it was by Lewis Carroll, and thought the illustrations were interesting and maybe the illustrator was famous and collectable’. Another informant acknowledges the books’ graphics: ‘with many people they are popular because of the artwork’. Thus, author, illustrator, and collectibility—at least a collectible appearance—all contribute to these booksellers’ perceptions of consumers’ desires.

**Material Pleasures of Used Books**

Public recognition of one’s object of desire remains another pleasure of the used text. Moreover, books themselves become scrapbooks for gathering related ephemera, memories, and reflections. The Smithsonian Institute Archives’ Duke Ellington Collection includes Peter Pauper Press’s *Aesop’s Fables for Modern Readers,* (1965) and *African Proverbs* (1962). The note on ‘scope and content’ of this container states, ‘Many books contain inscriptions to Ellington and Ellis from friends, fans and family members. Of particular interest are the following [. . .] an autographed letter from Booker T. Washington to A.J. Lathers, dated 24 October 1904, that has been glued inside the cover of Washington’s *Up From Slavery*’ (Smithsonian 2006).

Used goods tell consumption stories and consumption stories sell used goods. In a postmodern book market, we would expect to witness the consumer as producer, forming a new relation with the object, interacting to create a ‘new’ text by augmenting, annotating, animating and archiving, not simply accepting the authorial version (e.g., Brown 2006). These traces of consumption reveal humanity behind objects of desire.

“Living History: Biographical Objects and the Powerful Presence of the Past”

Pauline Maclaran, University of Keele, UK

Cele Otnes, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA

Objects, like humans, build up their own ‘life histories’ as they pass through transformations engendered by the context in which they are used, for example, as a gift, as mere commodity or as prized possession (Appadurai 1986). This ‘mutability of things in recontextualization’ (Thomas 1989, p. 49) is very much a part of the ‘social life of things’ (Appadurai 1986). The relationship between objects and their owners can be a complex intertwining of biographies. Just as objects have their own histories, so too do people invest their own histories in objects (Hoskins 2006). This interpretivist study explores these two-way biographical processes in relation to a collection of British Royal Family Memorabilia that is housed in a suburban bed and breakfast in North London.

Often referred to as ‘Britain’s loyalist Royalist’, Elizabeth’s passion is her collection of over 7,000 pieces of BRF-related memorabilia. . Wall-to-wall shelving, with china, crockery, pictures, and other colourful memorabilia abound throughout the living spaces of her home. Floor space is at a premium, with a sea of items spread densely across the carpets, including fourteen lifesize concrete corgi dogs, and a large wooden replica of the coronation throne. Each room features a quasi-shrine to particular royal family members (e.g., the Queen and Prince Philip, their children, the Queen Mother, and, most recently, Charles and Camilla). Sitting amid this clutter, paying guests are often to be seen eating breakfast to a backdrop of four giant cardboard cutouts (two of Diana, one each of Charles and the Queen Mother). Elizabeth’s pride and joy is her Diana Room, a sun room extension to her home commemorating the late Princess of Wales, her favourite member of the BRF. This collection has made her a minor celebrity, and provides her with the impetus to organize many social BRF-related events for consumers and the media alike.

Our study is grounded within a larger project on the meaning of the BRF brand to consumers. The data for this study was gathered over a two-year period during which the authors interacted with Elizabeth and others within her circle, as well as with cultural producers who disseminate information to the public (e.g., reporters, museum curators who borrow items from Elizabeth’s collection). Interactions occurred primarily through interviews and in-depth immersions during which the authors stayed at Elizabeth’s bed and breakfast for specific celebratory events. These immersions helped us supplement our interview data with direct observation of gatherings and day-to-day practices.

In this paper we focus on the social life of Elizabeth’s collection, and, more specifically, on its biographical aspects. Taking the three levels of mediation that Morin (1969) distinguishes as being characteristic of biographical objects, we analyse how Elizabeth’s collection relates to time, space and to Elizabeth herself. Then, using Gell’s (1998) notion of ‘distributed personhood’, we look at the ways in which Elizabeth is embodied in the many objects that comprise her collection and illustrate how Elizabeth’s transformation of her collection occurs in both biographical and historical time. As she recounts the histories of the objects in her collection, she interweaves her own history with them, together with the histories of others who have given her particular pieces. We conclude by recognising that Elizabeth and her collection are mutually constitutive of each other’s biographies and that this works to keep history alive by continually investing the past with the present and the present with the past.

“Dealing in Histories: Durability, Authenticity and Provenance in Markets for Antiques”

Liz Parsons, Keele University, UK

This paper argues that the sets of histories attached to objects often represent a key source of their value. It explores this premise through a focus on antique dealing, exploring in particular the way in which antique dealers talk about the provenance, histories and durability of the objects they sell. Stressing the history of objects is a key means through which dealers attempt to create an aura of singularity and thus value for objects. Discussion is based on 15 interviews with dealers in antiques from Leek, a town in Staffordshire and Glasgow, a city in Lanarkshire, UK. The two areas were
chosen as areas known to have agglomerations of antique shops. Interviews were conducted in naturalistic contexts typically on the shop or showroom floor.

The distance of antiques from the formal system of marketing and advertising makes them an important focus for study for consumer researchers. Such a distance opens up possibilities for a more creative interpretation of both use and value. In this sense dealers might be seen as acting as intermediaries in markets, instrumental in channelling objects from one context to another (re)creating their meaning and value in the process. Antiques are instrumental in channelling objects from one context to another dealers might be seen as acting as intermediaries in markets, chosen as areas known to have agglomerations of antique shops. Research into antique dealing has highlighted three sets of issues which closely relate to Belk’s observation. These are the role of durability, authenticity and provenance in markets for antiques. Kopytoff (1986) argues that markets for durable objects are fostered and encouraged by sellers whose strategies rest on stressing that the commoditisation of goods bought for consumption need not be terminal (1986: 75) The antique dealers interviewed often promoted antiques as good investments typically making direct contrasts with new (and more disposable) furniture (especially IKEA). Dealers readily observed that antique objects, through their durability, act as a means of storing money.

Authenticity and craftsmanship are also central to our understanding of antiques markets. Muthesius (1988), an art historian, observes that for antique furniture the Arts and Crafts movement has particular import for contemporary valuation. Thus the appraisal of the antique is located within specific movements or aesthetic regimes. The movement also has significance in shaping our contemporary understanding of authenticity. Benjamin (1968) takes this argument one step further in relating our conceptions of art and authenticity to techniques of production. He identifies two key facets of the authenticity of a thing, its substantive duration, its durability or ability to stand the tests of time which is an aspect of its material presence, but also its testimony to the history it has experienced. In interviews with dealers they often referred to the importance of craftsmanship in both the design and production of antiques, in particular the ways in which the authenticity of a piece could be verified through an understanding of its style and techniques of production.

Returning to Benjamin’s (1968) concept of testimony, many dealers also referred to the importance of provenance in antiques markets. They also identified the difficulties of proving the biography of an object, that the chest of drawers really did belong to royalty or (in one case) that the walking stick really is made from the spear which killed Captain Cook. Dealers iterated over and over that the ‘histories’ of objects were very important facets of their value. Using phrases such as ‘any history you can give them (customers) they really love’ and ‘it’s a lot to do with people wanting value for money but they’re also buying a bit of history and they know that’. Of course what constitutes these ‘histories’ is often largely up to the dealers themselves. One dealer when talking about a chandelier he had for sale observed that he would tell the customer it was French, from Marseille, and from a chateau, then said ‘I don’t know the name of the chateau but I shall make one up’. This comments leads us to wonder about just how many of the stories that dealers tell about their objects for sale are ‘made up’.

Thus the paper argues that the stories we tell about objects (in this case stories about their histories) are central to the process of value creation. Value is not just/only contained within objects, but is intimately related to our response to them. Such an approach also de-stabilises arguments that counter pose or separate out theories of meaning and value which have their basis in function and utility and those that have their basis purely in the visual. Over time the object changes in form and appearance and becomes aged. Such an aged appearance in the form of marks of use or wear, discoloration or patina can be sources of aesthetic appeal and thus of value. Thus the key theoretical implications of this paper for consumer research include the centrality of the materialities and biographies of things to value creation. This suggests that value must be seen as an ongoing project, continually being (re)created in our use of things.

REFERENCES

When Celebrity Endorsers Act as their Fictional Stage Characters: The Impact of Congruent and Non-Congruent Media Contexts on Advertising Effects

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

When consumers recollect media personalities familiar from television or movies, they think of them either as an actor or as the fictional character played by this actor. For instance, when consumers watch TV and Daniel Craig (the current James Bond actor) appears on the screen, they can perceive him as “this is Daniel Craig” or “this is James Bond.” Celebrities known from film and TV can serve as product endorsers while remaining in their fictional persona—they can give endorsements in character. According to McCracken (1989, 312), a celebrity known from fictional media is a composite of his or her fictional roles. His/her image therefore depends not on the actor’s qualities as a private person or celebrity, but on the qualities created in the stage persona in TV series and films. The fictional media provide information on fictional character traits that consumers may use to evaluate endorsers in-character. In this research, we consider whether an appropriate media context—that creates the stage persona of an endorser—compared with an inappropriate media context for an in-character endorsement, can enhance the evaluation of ad characteristics and the evaluation of the endorser’s perceived expertise and trustworthiness.

Findings from cultivation theory, children’s perception of advertising spokespersons, and parasocial theory as well as anecdotal evidence would lead us to believe that media images persist beyond the program itself and actually influence viewers’ real-world beliefs. Furthermore, research on media context effects has found that “consumers’ reactions to advertising are affected by their response to the program or print material in which the advertising is inserted” (Wang and Calder 2006, 151) and several findings on media context effects support the hypothesis that congruency between the program and the advertisement leads to greater advertising effectiveness. We add to the research on media context effects on advertising with a study which links celebrity endorsers to concrete fictional program content, i.e. to fictional characters. When program and advertising overlap—for example, when the advert features a character in a scene similar to one in the film or TV series—the advert represents a continuation of the film or TV series, and may evoke a more positive response due to viewers’ familiarity with the character and the advertising story.

Accessibility may also be the reason why information about fictional characters persists over time. When considering fictional worlds, the term celebrity is taken to mean the fictional characters rather than actors themselves (Stern, Russell, and Russell 2007). Here, we have to differentiate between two cases. In a long-term perspective, consumers are able to build up a parasocial relationship with a fictional character and come to regard this character as a friend or counsellor. Thus, fans might also rely on the advice of the person playing this character if they see him or her advertising a specific product. However, when we—as in our study—consider a rather short-term persistence of character images and consider media context effects, even if there is no close relationship between the recipient and the fictional character, a film character presented in a program might prime viewers, so that they evaluate this endorser as more competent and trustworthy. In our study, we assume that consumers who watch a TV series will consciously or unconsciously transfer the meanings of the fictional character to an advertisement, if the same actor appears as a celebrity endorser (congruent context). This is assumed to result in more positive evaluations of the endorser than in a media context, where this actor has not been presented in a preceding film, so that no knowledge on character traits is available (incongruent context).

However, conscious reactions, such as an evaluation of a spokesperson or of ad characteristics, may be subject to contrast effects (Stapel, Koomen, and van der Plight 1996) or source monitoring effects (Johnson 2002). These phenomena refer to consumers’ ability to identify the sources of potential influence and “correct” their memories. We therefore decided to measure consumer responses simultaneously with the perception of the stimuli. In this respect, we are interested in the positive responses to the advertisement in different media contexts and therefore used a measurement process that was also able to capture unconscious processes in relation to approach behaviour. In particular, we examined phasic arousal, measured by electrodermal registration (EDR), as evoked by the advertisements presented in a congruent versus incongruent media context. With respect to this approach response, we assume that congruent information attracts more attention and is processed more effectively than incongruent information, because the subject of information is already in people’s minds prior to the ad exposure.

All in all, we expect a congruent media context to have a positive effect on three things: the phasic arousal reactions to the advertisement, the evaluation of the endorser, and the evaluation of ad characteristics. In this paper, the term congruency is used to refer to the appearance of an actor as a celebrity endorser in an advertisement in a role that matches the presentation of this actor in a fictional program (i.e. the media context). Non-congruency refers to a situation in which the actor as a celebrity endorser is not immediately preceded by a program in which he or she features. These expectations can be expressed in the following hypotheses:

H1: The presentation of an endorser in a congruent fictional media context will result in higher phasic arousal reactions to the advertisement than a presentation of the endorser in a non-congruent fictional media context.

H2: The presentation of an endorser in a congruent fictional media context will result in a more positive evaluation of this endorser than a presentation of the endorser in a non-congruent fictional media context.

H3: The presentation of an advertisement in a congruent fictional media context will result in a more positive evaluation of ad characteristics than a presentation of the advertisement in a non-congruent fictional media context.

To test these hypotheses, an experiment was conducted consisting of two examples (“doctor” show, “undercover agent” show) based on actual TV sequences. The studies compared viewers’ responses to a celebrity endorser in a TV advertisement shown in a congruent versus a non-congruent media context. The results of the two examples show that an endorser presented in a media context that is congruent to the role presented in the advertisement leads to higher phasic arousal reactions than an endorser presented in a non-congruent context (H1). Furthermore, the endorser’s
expertise and trustworthiness was evaluated as more positive in the congruent media context condition (H2). The study provides a further indication that there are effects due to fictional factors: the enhanced evaluation of the advert with respect to the variable “not irritating” indicates that viewers understand the advertisement story better with the help of the associated film or TV series (H3). We also discuss possible avenues for future research.

References


Phonetic Symbolism and Brand Name Preferences in French and English

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Phonetic symbolism refers to the notion that the sounds of words convey meaning apart from their semantic connotation, and research in this area has a long history. For example, many researchers have shown that certain vowel sounds (e.g., the “ih” of “mill”) convey certain impressions (e.g., small, light, fast, and/or sharp) whereas other vowel sounds (e.g., the “ah” of “mall”) convey others (e.g., large, heavy, slow, and/or dull; see Newman 1933; and Sapir 1929). Similar effects have been noted with consonants as well.

Recent consumer research has applied these notions to the phonetic symbolism of brand names (Klink 2000; Lowrey and Shrum 2007; Lowrey, Shrum, and Dubitsky 2003; Yorkston and Menon 2004). In three of these studies, researchers showed that specific vowel sounds convey product attributes related to size, taste, temperature, etc. (Klink 2000; Lowrey and Shrum 2007; Yorkston and Menon 2004). These studies have also shown that brand names in which phonetic symbolism is complimentary to the product category (e.g., creamy and ice cream, Yorkston and Menon 2004; sharp and knife vs. dull and hammer, Lowrey and Shrum 2007; soft and shampoo, Klink 2001) are preferred over brand names with no such complimentarity.

One explanation for some of these findings is found in the front/back distinction for classifying vowels. This refers to the highest point of the location of the tongue when pronouncing a sound. For example, the highest position of the tongue is toward the front of the mouth for bee, and more toward the back for boot (Klink 2000). In Klink’s research, front vowels were determined to convey meanings of smaller, quicker, and sharper, whereas back vowels conveyed the opposite qualities of larger, slower, and duller.

Most research applying phonetic symbolism in the context of consumer behavior has been conducted in English. Although the results are quite robust, it is important to determine if the effects hold in other languages. In this paper, we present the results of an experiment designed to extend the research on the relation between phonetic symbolism, attribute congruence, and brand names to the French language. We exposed bilingual French-English speakers to questionnaires written either in their native language of French, or in English.

Experiment

In this experiment, we expected the following:

\[ H_1: \text{Brand names with back vowel sounds ("ah" sounds) will be preferred for products for which largeness, heaviness, lack of quickness, and/or dullness are considered positive attributes.} \]

\[ H_2: \text{Brand names with front vowel sounds ("ih" sounds) will be preferred for products for which smallness, lightness, quickness, and/or sharpness are considered positive attributes.} \]

However, there are two factors that might yield different results for processing materials written in different languages. First, given that the effects of phonetic symbolism are automatic, and given the more automatic nature of processing in one’s native language (and consequently the possibility of more deliberative processing in a second language, see Luna and Peracchio 2001), it could be that phonetic symbolism effects are more likely to occur in one’s native language, yielding our third hypothesis:

\[ H_3: \text{Native French speakers (who also speak English) responding to French questionnaires will show a more pronounced phonetic symbolism effect than those responding to English questionnaires.} \]

Method

Participants and Procedure. Fifty-four undergraduate students at an English-language business school in France participated in the study in return for partial class credit. All participants provided written consent to participate. The sessions were conducted in small groups (e.g., 12 participants) in a classroom.

Participants received questionnaires containing six name pairs. Order of presentation was counterbalanced. Participants indicated their brand name preferences for each name pair for a single set of products whose attributes are compatible with the symbolism of a particular vowel sound (i.e., either a 4X4 vehicle paired with a hammer, or a two-seater convertible paired with a knife). Thus, phonetic symbolism was a within-subjects factor and product category was a between-subjects factor. Assignment to groups was random. Participants then provided general demographics and language proficiency for both French and English. Finally, participants were asked to provide their impression of the purpose of the study. Following the study, all participants were thanked and debriefed.

Stimuli. Extensive pre-testing was conducted to arrive at six front/back name pairs that were valid in both languages. To ensure validity, names were selected that were non-words in both languages, were easily pronounceable in both languages (in the manner intended), and did not cue real words in either language. The six front/back name pairs are as follows: plim/plam; gliv/glav; frig/frag; brido/brado; prish/prash; and urid/urad. Pre-testing also confirmed that when pronounced or heard, the names were perceived to sound as intended.

Product categories were pre-tested to ensure a selection of products that differed on the important dimensions of size, weight, speed, and sharpness. Two product categories were selected: automotive vehicles and tools. For automotive vehicles, two-seater convertibles and 4X4 vehicles were selected as opposites (small/large; light/heavy; fast/slow; sharpness is irrelevant). For tools, knives and hammers were selected as opposites (light/heavy; sharp/dull; size and speed are irrelevant).

Results

The data from two incomplete questionnaires were dropped from the analysis. No participants indicated knowledge of the purpose of the experiment. There were no name pair order effects. The hypothesized main effects (H1 and H2) were supported. As the tabulation shows, “ahi” names were strongly preferred over “ih” names when the product category was a 4X4 vehicle and hammer,
but the exact opposite was true when the product category was two-seater convertible and knife. This main effect for product category was significant ($F(1, 51)=4.13; p=.02$):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product Category</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4X4/Hammer</td>
<td>51% 47%</td>
<td>57% 43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convertible/Knife</td>
<td>37% 60%</td>
<td>28% 68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The hypothesized interaction (H3) was also supported. The interaction between language and product category was significant ($F(1, 51)=4.08; p=.02$). The effects were stronger for those who received questionnaires written in French, and weaker for those who received questionnaires written in English:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product Category</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4X4/Hammer</td>
<td>57% 43%</td>
<td>57% 43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convertible/Knife</td>
<td>28% 68%</td>
<td>28% 68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References


The Brand Has Two Faces: Examining the Impact of an Accented Spokesperson on Brand Perceptions

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

A person’s accent is a persistent reminder of the diverse world in which we live. It signals that we are from different backgrounds, communities and cultures. Many commercials airing in the United States today feature spokespersons with British accents. Brands employing this practice include Orbit (gum), Luvs (diapers), Victoria’s Secret (lingerie), Samsung HDTV, Dyson (vacuum cleaners), Reach (toothbrushes), Aquafina (water) and All-Bran (cereal). This use of accented spokespersons has also been implemented in non-visual mediums such as the use of British accented announcers on internet radio advertisements for companies such as Vontage broadband telephone company and Launch.com internet radio. Possible reasons for using British accented spokespeople include the notion that the relative uniqueness of the sound of their voice will enhance consumers’ attention toward the advertisement, the belief that British accented speech may bring to mind the stereotypical British nanny or butler that may be thought to be authority figures in childcare and proper home maintenance, the notion that doing so adds an air of refinement and sophistication to the respective brands or the fact that the brands may actually originate from abroad. To date, however, we know very little about how accents of the advertised brand can influence consumers.

In this research, we report some initial findings about how a British accented spokesperson influences consumers’ perceptions of the advertised brand. Drawing on the stereotyping literature, findings from the examination of language attitudes and models of belief formation and meaning transfer, we investigate whether and how stereotypes evoked by accented speech impacts brand perceptions.

Across cultures, the standard accent variety (i.e. the accent perceived to be correct) is usually rated high on status and low on personal integrity. Rural accents tend to show the opposite pattern: low on status and high on personal integrity. Ko, Judd and Blair (2006) argue that while social psychologists have traditionally focused on salient visual cues such as race and gender as a basis for categorization, auditory cues such as those provided by the voice may be just as salient in social settings since vocal cues are often the first cues elicited when encountering someone for the first time. These authors argue and find that vocal cues are used to categorize a person’s gender and this category information then leads to gender-stereotypic inferences. Specifically, these researchers find that participants associate more feminine-sounding voices with female-stereotypic attributes for both female and male voices. In addition, female-stereotypic inferences continued to be made even when gender was a salient cue. This research suggests an important link between the voice as an auditory cue and the activation of stereotypic information.

Spoken language identifies the speaker as a member of a specific ethnic or cultural group. Edwards (1999) indicates that listening to a given accent variety can act as a trigger or stimulus that evokes attitudes, prejudices and stereotypes concerning the relevant speech community. The attitudes of the listener toward members of that particular group may be generalized to the speaker (Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner and Fillenbaum, 1960). For example, upon hearing a British accented person, stereotypes concerning the British (i.e. highly educated, proper) may become salient.

In examining the influence of celebrities as sources of persuasion information, McCracken (1989) developed the meaning transfer model which suggests that celebrityendorser effectiveness depends on the cultural associations and meanings associated with the celebrity which are transferred to the product and then to the product user. We suggest that a similar meaning transfer process takes place when consumers are exposed to an accented spokesperson. For example, in the first stage, stereotypes about a speech community or country are formed based on past experiences, societal influences and learning about the community or country. In the second stage, these stereotypes are transferred to the products when accented speakers serve as product endorsers. Finally, these meanings can potentially transfer from product to product user in the final stage. In the present research we concentrate on the first two stages.

Incorporating these streams of research, we hypothesize that hearing an accent will evoke stereotypes of the relevant community (i.e. hearing a British accent activates the stereotype that the British are highly educated, etc.) and that these stereotypes can impact brand perceptions. We compare the effects of using a British-accented spokesperson, which for our sample is a differently-accented spokesperson, with the effects of using an American-accented, which for our sample is a same-accented spokesperson. We explore the impact of accented spokespersons on brand perceptions by analyzing brand personality and other brand attribute perceptions, and by implementing the Brand Concept Maps technique. Brand Concept Maps (BCM) is a technique that allows us to examine linkages between the salient brand associations that underlie consumer brand perceptions (John, Loken, Kim and Monga, 2006).

The BCM Technique can be described in three stages. In the first stage, the elicitation stage, important brand associations are elicited from consumers. In the second stage, consumers create maps to show how brand associations are connected to the brand and to one another. In the final stage, researchers aggregate these individual brand maps to create a consensus brand map. Results from an experiment suggest that different Brand Concept Maps are created when different accents (American vs. British) are featured in a radio commercial. For example, the brand map in the American condition is relatively simple whereas the brand map in the British condition is much more complex with a greater number of associations and interconnections. This suggests that using an accented spokesperson in a commercial can enhance the associations and perceptions that consumers have of a brand, provided that consumers have mostly positive associations of the speech community represented by the selected accent.

In addition, participants had a more favorable overall opinion of the brand in the British condition than did participants in the American condition. Also, there was a marginally significant effect on quality perceptions in that participants in the British condition perceived the brand as higher quality than did participants in the American condition. In addition, participants in the British condition rated the brand as more unique, more expensive (even though no pricing information was provided) and more sophisticated. Participants in the American condition did, however, rate the brand as more “All-American” than did participants in the British condition.
References
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Over the past half century, consumers in Australia and elsewhere have been confronted with a plethora of health food products. This paper addresses the issue of a specific kind of health food, so-called functional foods (such as calcium-enriched orange-juice), that encourage consumption through the promise of health benefits. In this context, functional foods serve as a lens to explore the growing consumer culture in Australia.

Examining functional foods from an historical perspective, this paper asserts that promoting such foods, nutritionists, scientists, food manufacturers come together in ways that serve as an advisory nexus in an increasing context of ‘gastro-anomie’ that Fischler (1980) speaks of. This context is not something that has happened suddenly or because of recent changes, but rather has been developing over the past half-century among Australian consumers.

Fifty years of advertising, editorial content, recipe sections and articles are examined from the Australian Women’s Weekly (AWW) which is the most widely read ‘women’s’ magazine in the country. Using its place as an influential publication relating to matters of health, food and management of the home, we interpret the content. Warde’s (1997) antinomies of tastes are used as a starting point, to show how the anxiety and risks associated with food consumption are built up and allayed by an advisory nexus which is manifested in the publication over the decades.

The attempt to instill self-regulatory regimes with regard to self-care and food consumption along with the contradictions of indulgence and extravagance are discussed.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Music is an object that contains the tendencies and contradictions of society and culture (Adorno in Paddison 1982). Like advertisement, music is also a cultural text which is an important medium in reading an audience (O’Donohoe 2000). Through the language of songs, music informs and expresses meanings that are not only in alignment with the targeted audience but the socio-historic conditions of a society. As a religious product, it is a site where ideology circulates as well as a mirror used to represent the sacred which is highly visible, audible, saleable and malleable to socio-cultural forces. Articulated through discourse, an ideology is intended to draw attention to the ways in which cultural texts (songs, television shows, films, etc) always present a particular image of the world. Music style is also never neutral, but is organically wed to the socio-cultural setting in which the music is created and developed (Romanowski, 1992) to convey certain meanings to a particular audience. What is conveyed not only has marketplace implications in terms of the appeal to the music, but to the religious institution also. The study of Christian music cannot be separated from its source—that is the institution that produces it, as it is inside this domain that production and consumption of this form of music predominantly takes place.

Religious products and relations to the sacred have been documented in previous research (Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry 1989; O’Guinn and Belk 1989; Arnould and Price 2004), but have been predominantly studied as a metaphoric stance rather than specifically about the ‘Sacred’ per se (Iacobucci 2001). In an attempt to study how religious discourses (as expressed through religious music) synergise with consumer culture, a discourse analysis into Christian music is conducted in this research. Through analysing the genre, lyrics and aesthetic appeal of a religious song, layers of meaning are ‘deconstructed’ to reveal an ‘acculturation of discourses’.

A cross section of a contemporary style (Pentecostal) of Christian music in the ‘praise and worship’ genre dating from 1990–2005 was selected. I used textually-oriented discourse analysis (Fairclough 1992) to do a reading (Scott 1994; Stern 1989) of lyrics and explored the meaning expressed through the language of songs. 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 produces an assortment of representations and discourses which requires a marriage of visual, audio, and textual data. 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 music events.

Whilst religious discourses to do with Christianity are apparent, this is mixed with other discourses such as self-empowerment and individuality framed in the context of ‘today’. This ‘mixing’ of arguably sacred and secular discourses evident in this type of Christian music reflect a shift in values which can be explained by Inglehart’s (1997) theory on post-materialist values that highlight self expression and self empowerment readily prevalent in highly developed societies where existential security already exists. Because physical security is already adequate in highly developed societies, the discourse on the sacred appears to play a more self-serving role framed in current consumer culture. Whilst secularisation theory (Martin 2005) posits a decline in religion at the macro level, the popularity of some ‘version’ of religious form and products suggest at the meso level a resurgence of ‘sacred interest’. It appears that a process of appropriation (Thompson and Haytko 1997; Cova and Cova 2000) has taken place whereby religious music is able to align itself to changing socio-cultural shifts to incorporate multiple discourses into its contents and meaning which results in a version that resonates with current religious consumers.

References
Do Consumers Mind Buying Illicit Goods? The Case of Counterfeit Purchases
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Counterfeiting is a global phenomenon that has mushroomed in scale and seriousness in the course of just a few years. The figures point to a phenomenon that is of particular interest to consumer researchers. Besides the stream of research that is concerned with the supply side of counterfeiting, a variety of studies have directed their interest to the demand side in order to investigate determinants of decisions for counterfeit products. While those studies have identified several significant determinants such as age, price, or quality, they have provided mixed results for the impact of measures related to the consciousness of illegality or moral reasoning on purchase decisions for counterfeit products. Indeed, previous research has shown that consumers tend to be satisfied with counterfeit purchases and have a strong inclination to repurchase such products. Given the fact that purchasing counterfeit products is factually an illegal behavior, these results let us question how consumers manage to ignore moral concerns of their behavior.

Conceptual development. The weak impact of moral consciousness may be explained by the fact that consumers are not fully aware of the illegality of their behavior. When they are aware, consumers try to excuse and to justify their behavior, indicating coping behavior with cognitive dissonance between their behavior and their moral beliefs. In line with the basic premise of the theory of cognitive dissonance, several ways to reduce dissonance after purchase decisions are suggested:

1. Consumers reduce the importance of the dissonant elements by devaluing the importance of the purchase decision.
2. Consumers add consonant elements by enhancing the value of the chosen alternative.
3. Consumers change or re-interpret the dissonant elements by devaluing the non-chosen alternative.

When consumers are not aware of the illegality, dissonance is more likely when a less attractive offer is purchased. When the consequences become apparent, a moral issue arises and becomes a dissonant element. Moral issues are the main sources of cognitive dissonance and they vary in their degree of intensity, subject to the perceived consequences of immoral behavior. The attractiveness of the offer then becomes a moderating variable as it alters the degree of moral intensity, and as such the degree of cognitive dissonance experienced by consumers. Attractiveness of the offer may then intensify the need for justification and consumers will tend to apply coping strategies. On the other hand, an unattractive offer provides an external justification for illicit behavior in that efforts of coping with cognitive dissonance should be lowered. The following hypothesis is suggested:

H1: (a) In the case of low awareness of the negative consequences of counterfeit purchases, less attractive offers lead to more compliance with dissonance coping strategies compared to more attractive offers.
(b) In the case of high awareness of the negative consequences of counterfeit purchases, more attractive offers lead to more compliance with dissonance coping strategies compared to less attractive offers.

When dissonance strategies are successful, the evaluation pattern and the satisfaction with the purchase are likely to result in the same effect for both low and high awareness of negative consequences and for less and highly attractive offers alike.

H2: (a) Evaluation of the purchase decision and (b) satisfaction with the purchase decision do not differ between consumers who have bought the less vs. the highly attractive offer.
H3: (a) Evaluation of the purchase decision and (b) satisfaction with the purchase decision do not differ between consumers who vary in awareness of negative consequences of their behavior.

Method. We performed an experiment with a 2 (unattractive vs. attractive offer) by 2 (low vs. high awareness of consequences) between-subjects factorial design. One hundred graduate students at a German university volunteered to participate in the study. A scenario providing a purchase situation for counterfeit sunglasses was presented. The counterfeit was offered for 20 Euros (attractive offer) or 75 Euros (unattractive offer) compared to a price of 150 Euros for the genuine product. In the awareness situation, the respondents were also reminded that buying counterfeits is illegal, since it harms the manufacturer of the original product, economies, and society. Participants had to answer three questions on dissonance reduction strategies. They evaluated the purchase decision, reported their satisfaction, and answered two questions in order to measure the success of the manipulation.

Results. Manipulation checks indicate successful manipulations. ANOVA results show that in the low awareness condition, consumers comply with dissonance reduction strategies in the case of unattractive offers, while in the case of high awareness they are in attune with reduction strategies for the high attractive offer. H1 is supported by the data. H2 and H3, the effects on evaluation and satisfaction, are only supported in the case of low awareness of negative consequences but not for high awareness. Only the strategy “devaluation of the non-chosen alternative” shows the assumed mediation effect for evaluation and satisfaction.

Discussion. The application of coping strategies is successful. When consumers with moral concerns are aware of the negative consequences of their behavior, they comply with coping strategies more often when offers are attractive. The application of coping strategies enhances satisfaction and the evaluation of a highly attractive offer that is even higher than in the low awareness condition. However, for the low attractive offer, the effects on satisfaction and evaluation even decrease. The “devaluation of the non-chosen alternative” strategy serves both: a change in attractiveness perception and the reduction of the perceived degree of harm for a genuine brand. The findings contribute to the research on counterfeiting by explaining why previous research has provided rather mixed results for the impact of moral consciousness on counterfeit purchases. The results provide implications for manufacturers and policy makers who are concerned about the rise of counterfeiting. Countermeasures should not only focus on making consumers aware that their behavior is illegal, they should also be concerned about the attractiveness that counterfeit products have for consumers.
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Symbolic Consumption in Hong Kong Chinese Society: Narratives of Self and Special Possessions
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Margaret K. Hogg, Lancaster University, UK

EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Current western research on the self-concept does not capture the notion of the self as understood and enacted in collectivistic cultures such as China (Marsh et al., 2003). This means that current theoretical and empirical understanding of the interrelationship between identity, self and consumption does not necessarily transfer neatly from western to non-western cultural contexts. This study addresses this research gap by examining self, identity and consumption with specific reference to Hong Kong Chinese consumers. While studies of symbolic consumption have been well documented in the West; research in South Eastern Asia has been comparatively limited.

In a Chinese context, views of the self in a social context carry very different meanings from the West because social relationships and roles form the core of the Chinese self-concept (Hsu, 1971). For Chinese consumers branded products function as important social instruments which can signify an in-group social identity linked to peers of similar social status; and at the same time can signal increased distance from other groups, to which they do not want to belong (Tse, 1996). This means that Chinese consumers potentially pay more attention to branded products (such as watches) and special possessions because these material goods represent a primary basis for establishing social distinctions between in-groups and out-groups (Tse et al., 1994).

However, there is evidence of both interdependent and independent selves in non-western cultures. In this exploratory study of the self-concept in a non-western context, in order to pursue both the notion of the self as understood and enacted in collectivistic and individualistic aspects of their selves and identities when narrating their personal stories about possessions. Selves and identities are embedded in discourse in the format and construction of stories (Georgakopoulou, 2002). On the other hand, Chinese consumers may reveal selves and identities on an individualistic level when narrating their personal stories about possessions.

Our findings problematize current rather reductionist views of the self which align Chinese self and identity with collectivist and interdependence in contrast to western notions of individualistic and independent. Rather our findings suggest much more complex cases for construction of identity around multiple aspects of the self. This study showed how people are open to both macro (e.g. different cultures and systems) and micro level influences (e.g. family) within the context of symbolic consumption. Self and identity change according to different life experience and stages, as told by the story narrators. In Hong Kong, construction of people’s selves and identities tend to lie on a continuum from Western (independent) self to Asian (interdependent) self. The changing pattern of domination and subordination in the synthesis of these macro and micro influences potentially varies by cultural context.

There is no doubt that cultural orientation plays a significant role in constructing one’s self and identity (Aaker and Maheswaran, 1997). A wide range of research of Western and Asian selves regarding conspicuous consumption has been well documented (Wong and Ahuvia, 1998, Tse, 1996, Zhou and Belk, 2004). Under the influence of Chinese culture, Hong Kong people tend to have more collective attitudes and behave in certain ways according to social norms. They seem to focus on publicly visible possessions that signify in-group and out-group differences (e.g. Simon’s story about his BMW). This confirmed that social relationships and roles form the core of the Chinese self-concept (Hsu, 1971). The social (interdependent) self emphasizes the significant role of relationships, and particularly the importance of fitting in with the family, group and society as Confucius had highlighted that interpersonal harmony shapes the social self. Affiliation to group still played a significant role in forming their selves and identities. These Chinese consumers tended to buy branded products to signify an in-group social identity (Tse et al., 1994).

However, stories from Zabrina, Simon and Alex showed that personal (independent) self (which is typically identified with the western notions of the self) also played a relatively important role in terms of forming their selves. This independent self emphasized more the inner attributes that tend to promote an autonomous and unique entity that is not dependent on others (Markus and Kitayama, 1991, Heine, 2001). These stories also offered another perspective when investigating selves and identities among collective people, as Hong Kong Chinese tend to view possession value as related to “value in use rather than to economic value” (Richins, 1994). Their stories showed that people have items that are so special and meaningful independent of or in addition to their economic value. Some of our findings provide an interesting counterpoint to these earlier studies of the self in other East Asian studies which had indicated that internal personal (inner) attributes are not emphasized in representing the self among the Chinese. Amongst Hong Kong Chinese, there was some evidence of the independent internal self (e.g. Zabrina’s and Simon’s stories).

Collecting and analyzing consumer narratives allowed a deeper understanding in terms of how informants view themselves through their attachments, i.e. possession value of objects. The advantages of sharing the meaning of their possessions with the researcher through stories were that they are not only talking about the public meanings of the items, but also the private meanings. This allowed access to both interdependent and independent aspects of the self; and also to capture temporal notions of the self-change/continuity as possessions provide “symbolic benefits delivering self-change/continuity value” (Kleine and Baker, 2004: 25). It is particularly significant for the present study because these informants shared their inner most feelings about their possessions and revealed who they were, how they became who they are and perhaps who they want to be in the future, which meant that different views of the self started to emerge around the axes of continuity and change, providing the basis for further research.

Reference


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This research outlines brand production and consumption throughout Imperial China using a historical research approach (Witkowski and Jones 2006). While the branding literature commonly claims that the birth of brands occurred in the Western world, there is almost no mention of when and how brands developed in the non-Western world. This omission is despite the fact that names or place names stamped on wares to delineate their origin was common in China during the Han Dynasty (220 BC-AD 200), and the first documented developed brand in the world, the White Rabbit brand of sewing needles, was in the Song Dynasty period (960-1127). To explore the history of branding in China, we examined secondary sources available in Chinese as well as academic literature published outside the field of marketing. Our research reveals that brands have been commonplace throughout Chinese history since the Song Dynasty despite the absence of a capitalist economy which did not emerge until the late twentieth century. In China brands have not developed solely as an instrument of commerce, but rather have served a variety of social purposes ranging from signifying an affiliation with the Imperial Palace (Zuo 1999) to demonstrating the worth of a family name (Hamilton and Lai 1989). Brands in Imperial China were used as aids in marketing products, as opposed to a means to regulate the activities of merchants, as was the case in medieval Europe (Hamilton and Lai 1989).

Our analysis demonstrates the uses and symbolic meanings Imperial Chinese brands have had and their connection to social systems and cultural contexts. Brand development in China was not connected with capitalism and served a more social rather than economic function, where managers were not necessarily shepherding the brand development, which demonstrates an alternate model of brand development. Thus, there can be a multiplicity of ways brands can evolve, and these evolve based on common understanding and practices. This insight allows us to clarify the brand concept by demonstrating that there are a variety of branding systems rather than one, Western model. Our research indicates that the relationship between capitalism, brands and consumer culture has to be reconsidered. In the marketing literature, brands are generally considered to have emerged as a consequence of a capitalist economy where manufacturers use brands to achieve differentiation and improve profits. However, historical evidence from China illustrates that brands emerged although there was no capitalist economy. In this research we also find occurrences of consumer initiated branding activities, suggesting that brands are not necessarily supply-driven by manufacturers or sellers but can be demand-driven by consumers. This suggests that brands are an outcome rather than the mechanism that generates consumer culture.

The evolution of brands in China appears to be in sharp contrast to their development in the U.S. in the nineteenth century, where brand manufacturers pushed their brands on the market, seeking to overcome consumer resistance (Strasser 1989). The fact that consumers are involved in branding activities may be related to the universal human interest in consumerism that emerges in all societies (Stearns 2001). This suggests the need for distinction is important enough to consumers that they will take branding tasks on themselves to achieve this in the marketplace. The accounts of consumer and government initiated branding activities in China point to the fact that other stakeholders besides the brand sponsor provide input toward the establishment of brands. This finding is consistent with the principles of cultural branding which recognizes the various participants that construct a brand’s image (Holt 2004). The contention that multiple stakeholders define the brand in the marketplace challenges the idea of brand management as a manager centered activity. Peñaloza and Venkatesh (2006) argue convincingly that to understand value in the marketplace, meaning in both exchange and use must be understood. In a branding context, this means that to understand the value of a brand, the meaning of the brand as created by both consumers and marketers must be understood. The co-creative nature of brand meaning has been demonstrated in the area of retro branding (Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry Jr. 2003), and this research provides evidence it may have been occurring in Imperial China. The notion of co-creative brands has significant implications for managers who seek to develop strong brands that resonate with consumers. Rather than assuming that managers define brands through marketing communication, the co-creative nature of brand development suggest that brands evolve in co-operative circles where successful brands align themselves with the consumers they seek to establish relationships with.

References


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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to examine the perceptions of the key factors of choice of Australia as a study destination among postgraduate international students from Asia and their impact on student satisfaction as an overall strategy to meet the challenges faced by universities in a globalized education market. In this study the term “postgraduate” is used to describe students who follow graduate studies up to a PhD degree and no post PhD students are included. The analysis is focussed on an evaluation of factors of choice considered in choosing Australia as a study destination and the importance of these factors in influencing student satisfaction.

The internationalization of education remains one of the major challenges faced by the universities as a result of the increasing mobility of students worldwide. These challenges are seen as threats as well as opportunities for higher education systems around the world. Drucker (1997) has boldly predicted the demise of “traditional universities” with the growth of open and online universities. International education since then has further widened the scope in cross border education with increasing student mobility, academic mobility, program mobility and institution mobility (Naidoo 2006). Setting up offshore campuses by foreign institutions through branch campuses, subsidiaries or partnership arrangements, providing courses and qualifications to local students has contributed to the expansion of the international higher education. Further the reforms on financing and governance of higher educational institutions world over has had an impact on the delivery of educational services and how the institutions operate. These include curriculum reforms, student exchange programs, development new skills compatible with global and international competencies, promoting inter cultural activities on campus, introduction of new processes to absorb intercultural dimension into teaching research and service (Naidoo 2006).

The global demand for higher education is estimated to reach nearly 100 million by 2010, more than double the level in 1990 (UNESCO, 1998) During the same period the Asian share of this demand is expected increase from a third at 17 million to nearly half at 45 million. These figures could rise even higher as the income levels in the two major economies in the region, namely China and India, increases resulting in further increases in demand for higher education. A study by IDP Australia projects the global demand for higher education to reach 7.2 million students by 2025 (Bohm et al, 2002) of which 70% of them will be from Asia. According to this study the average compound growth rate for Asia is 7.8% compared to the average growth rate for all countries of 5.8%. This growth trend has been visible in the recent statistics. For example, between 1999 and 2004, the number of mobile students worldwide increased from 1.75 to 2.5 million, reflecting the rapid expansion of higher education overall and seven countries (USA, U.K, Germany, France, Australia, Japan and New Zealand host 68% of the world’s foreign or mobile students (UIS 2006). International students represent 18% of the Australia’s tertiary enrolments during 2002/2003 – highest among all other international education service providers in the world. Currently Australia commands 5% market share of the global education market behind USA (23%), U.K (12%), Germany (11%), and France (10%) (UNESCO, 2006). Education has therefore become a global industry, with more people than ever before choosing to undertake an international education across the world with Asia becoming the main driver of this demand (DFAT 2005).

This is largely due to capacity constraints in Asian countries to accommodate increasing numbers students seeking higher education and it is doubtful whether Asian countries are able to increase the required physical capacity and trained academics within a short period of time. Sohail and Saeed (2003) report that despite the industry efforts in developing educational infrastructure, the number of Malaysian students seeking education abroad has not declined dramatically supporting the notion that the available resources are inadequate to meet the demand. It is very likely, therefore, that at least in the short to medium term the international demand for higher education will increase considerably offering opportunities and challenges to higher education institutions around the world.

Marketing education focusing on market driven strategies in the international context has therefore received considerable attention among universities all over the world. This has led to an increasingly competitive and dynamic educational environment. USA, U.K, Canada, Australia and New Zealand have taken the lead in this process targeting markets primarily in Asia such as China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Indonesiia, Hong Kong and the Middle East. Considerable effort is required not only to attract but also to retain students in this competitive environment. Superior service delivery to meet students’ needs and expectations and to maintain student satisfaction and loyalty towards study destinations becomes a key objective of the universities. In this process, universities need to cope with the challenges of cultural diversity, varied learning styles, the changing demands of students who are presented with a much wider choice of study destinations, educational programs and study environments than before.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The primary aim of this study is to evaluate student perceptions of factors that were considered by International postgraduate students from Asia in choosing Australia as a study destination and the importance of these factors in influencing their satisfaction. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- Identify the factors influencing choice of Australia as a study destination and their relative importance in students’ decision making process
- Test the relationship of these factors with student satisfaction using structural equation modelling;
- Examine from a marketing point of view, the actions and strategies that universities should take in order to improve the levels of satisfaction among students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing theory suggests that addressing the needs of customer segments ensures customer satisfaction and loyalty leading to organizational success. The creation and the delivery of superior customer value is pivotal in customer satisfaction (Kotler, 2003). Driven by the attractiveness of the international education market in terms of pecuniary and non pecuniary benefits to the respective institutions and the country, higher educational institutions, like many other organisations are concerned with market share, productivity, return on investment and the quality of services offered to their customers (LeBlanc & Nha, 1997). Service quality, in this context, is acknowledged as a key performance measure for excel-
lence in education and a major strategic variable for universities as service providers to increase market share (Donaldson and Runciman, 1995), with enduring effects on the institution and the students it serves.

Whilst there is a body of knowledge relating to how and why international students study abroad and choose particular countries and institutions as study destinations, research on the post-choice behaviour of students and, particularly in relation to regard to their satisfaction with study destinations is limited. The available studies are largely focussed on either one institution or undergraduate students and more importantly, no studies have been undertaken on student satisfaction on a study destination involving post-graduate student groups selected for this study. The present study, therefore, will make a contribution by filling a void in the academic research in this area.

The choice of a study destination is normally considered as a two-stage process, where the student chooses a country first and then the educational institution, though the choice of a country and an educational institution can also be separate and independent of each other. Socio-economic and environmental factors/variables such as Safety, Life style, Cost of living, Transportation, Racial discrimination, Visas and Immigration potential, Friends and family, Climate, Culture (Veloutsou et al, 2005, Arambewela, 2003, Lawley, 1998, Duan 1997, IDP, 1995) have been associated with the choice of a country as a study destination while individual level factors/variables such as Study programs and courses, Fees, Facilities and support services, Intellectual climate, Teaching quality, Teaching staff and methods, Recognition of courses, Image and prestige of the university (Veloutsou et al, 2005, Arambewela, 2003, Smith et al, 2002, Townley, 2001, Geall, 2000, DETYA, 2000, Burke, 1986) have been identified in the choice of a university as a study destination. This study investigated 36 of these service delivery factors/variables to evaluate the level of performance on each one of them as perceived by the International postgraduate students to infer their satisfaction.

University education falls into the domain of services marketing where service performances are considered situation specific (Schoefer and Ennew, 2005) and two services cannot be treated as identical if they are performed in different settings and by different individuals (Love lock et al, 2003; Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000, Adler and Graham, 1989). Given the student diversity, differences in learning styles, previous life experiences and the variation in service facilities offered by universities the perceptions of the overall service performance will be different thus contributing a major challenge to universities in terms of sustaining a uniform standard of service performance (Dawson Conti-Bekkers, 2002, Patterson and Smith, 2001). Perceptions formed by students on service performance are the result of the student attitudes which will be expressed either as positive or negative (Keaveney, 1999, Boshoff, 1997) based on how far student expectations on the delivery of the services have been met by the university. If a negative attitude is formed it will be difficult to achieve overall satisfaction and could result in complaints, decreasing loyalty and negative Word Of Mouth (WOM) promotion (Kau and Loh 2006, Maxham and Netemeyer, 2002). It is critical therefore for universities to manage student perceptions of service performance in order to improve their attitudes towards the institution (Bagozzi, 1992). Universities will need to recognize the fact that postgraduate students all of whom are with prior experience in a university service environment (compared to undergraduate students) are expected to evaluate an educational service differently resulting in the formation of different attitudes towards service performance.

Australia’s late entry into international education has offered both opportunities and challenges. It has provided the tertiary sector with increasing student numbers, significant economic benefits, international goodwill and recognition of Australia as a study destination. There is no disagreement that the success of Australian universities in internationalizing education has indeed been spectacular and the current trends indicate more opportunities for Australia with the further expansion of the international student market. Though Australia remains relatively a small player in the global education market with a 7% share, the importance of the industry to the local economy is very significant. In 2003 the exports of educational services contributed over $5.2 billion (Nelson, 2004). Between 1999 and 2004, the international student enrolments increased by 41% with China and India registering the highest growth. In the higher education sector, international students represent over 54% of the total student population, 76% of which are from Asia (AEI, 2005). Postgraduate students comprise 33% of all international students and trends indicate that this sector is growing fast. All these indicate a positive picture for Australia but universities are conscious of the challenges for the Australian international education industry in coping with this dynamic environment. The continued increase in the domestic and international competition, the impact of the political, social and other global environmental issues on the international student mobility worldwide, the pressure on the universities to be increasingly self sufficient with external funding as a result of the cuts on federal government funding for education together with structural reforms such as removing the cap on the number of full fee paying students, encouraging institutions to compete against each other for students and funding some of these major challenges (Cull, 2007). The recent introduction of the “Melbourne model” by The University of Melbourne which is designed to shift its education delivery to a two tier higher education structure similar to the US is expected to have wider impact throughout the university sector (Nette, 2007). The growing need for adjustments and changes to meet the needs of the market is therefore evident. Superior service delivery and student satisfaction remain key variables in such a scenario.

METHODOLOGY

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this study is based on the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm (Oliver, 1980) and the Servqual (Service Quality) model to measure the relative post-choice satisfaction of international students from various Asian countries studying in Australia.

It postulates that customer satisfaction is related to the size and direction of disconfirmation, which is defined as the difference between an individual’s pre-purchase (pre-choice) expectations (or some other comparative standard) and post-purchase (post choice) performance of the product or service as perceived by the customer (Oliver 1980; Anderson, 1973). If expectations are met or exceeded, the customer is satisfied. Dissatisfaction results when perceived performance falls below expectations.

SERVQUAL is an instrument for assessing customer perceptions of service quality in service and retailing organisations (Parasuraman et al, 1988). The construct of service quality is defined in terms of perceived quality—a customers’ judgement about an entity’s overall excellence or superiority. The questionnaire used in this study was an adaptation of the SERVQUAL instrument developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) and was designed to measure the gap between student responses on expectations and perceptions of the university as a study destination on a seven point bi-polar scale. The responses were sought on 36 statements representing student expectations of the operations and services of the university under desired choice and their post-choice
perceptions. The gap between expectations and perceptions was used as indices to measure student satisfaction in each of the items.

Since its introduction, SERVQUAL with its model of five dimensions of service quality has been widely acclaimed as a major contribution to academic and particularly marketing literature and was originally used to assess customer perceptions of service quality in service and retailing organisations (Furrer et al, 2000; Parasuraman et al, 1988). The SERVQUAL instrument with its application in a variety of research pursuits in services and manufacturing industries (Furrer et al, 2000) became very popular among marketing practitioners and researchers. The major applications, however, were in the service industry. Despite its popularity it remained criticised on its operational and measurement problems, particularly in the use of P-E difference score as a measurement of perceived quality as opposed to performance based measure (Cronin and Taylor, 1994; Carman, 1990), ambiguity in the type of expectations eg. desired or adequate, which would provide different satisfaction responses (Swan and Tranwick, 1981), the link between satisfaction and service quality (Cronin and Taylor, 1994; Teas, 1993) and the number and nature of its dimensions being inappropriate for some service industries such as product services and “pure” services (Llosa et al, 1998). Parasuraman et al, in 1994, responded to these criticisms of the instrument by introducing some adjustments to the scale and its operation. They also defended the disconfirmation based measure of customer satisfaction and its link with service quality arguing that the incorporation of customer expectations provide richer information and have more diagnostic value. Conceding that there is confusion with regard to the causal relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality, they acknowledged that recent research evidence support service quality as an antecedent of customer satisfaction.

Data Collection and Analysis
A mixed method research approach was used for the study that comprised an exploratory review of literature and both qualitative and quantitative data-gathering stages to address the research objectives. The exploratory stage gathered information to guide the qualitative and quantitative stages of the research. The qualitative phase of the study involved three focus groups with the participation of 31 postgraduate international students from three different Australian universities in the state of Victoria. The objectives of the focus groups were to verify and refine variables identified by past research and to determine their relevance to measure post-choice satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

The data used in this study was derived from a mail survey conducted among international postgraduate students from Asia studying at five universities in the state of Victoria, Australia. A total of 573 useable responses were received which represented an acceptable 24% response rate.

Structural equation modelling (SEM) in AMOS was used to analyse the data this method was chosen because it allows the researcher to consider overall tests of model fit, regression weights, correlation coefficients, means and variances simultaneously. SEM allows the researcher to: (1) estimate multiple and interrelated relationships through multiple regression equations, and (2) represent unobserved concepts or variables in the relationships. SEM takes a confirmatory, i.e., hypothesis testing, approach to the analysis of structural theory influencing phenomenon. This methodology represents a causal approach that seeks to examine a set of relationships between one or more independent variables and one or more dependent variables.

Data was checked for coding errors, missing data, outliers and normality of the data (Malhotra et al., 2006). This study utilised both exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Exploratory factor analysis was used to extract the items that provided a reliable measure of the constructs under investigation in this study. The analysis was conducted using Maximum Likelihood estimation (ML) with Direct Oblimin rotation. Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity was significant (0.000) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) was 0.93. The initial results of the factor analysis identified seven factors that conceptually matched the expected descriptions of the constructs.

Reliability of the independent scales was assessed and found to be very satisfactory with Cronbach’s alpha coefficient at 0.70 or above for all factors (Hair 2006; Zikmund 1998) namely, Education 0.92, Image and Prestige .90, Social Orientation 0.89, Technology 0.93, Accommodation .78, Safety.78, Economic Considerations .70. The path model’s fit indices indicate a good fit of the model to the data MIN/DF= 2.71, DF=145, P=0.1, GFI=.94, TLI=.96, CFI=.97, RMSEA=.05. The model was also found to be sound with regard to nomological, discriminant and convergent validity. The interrelationships of the 19 independent variables the seven constructs and the dependent variable of satisfaction is presented in diagram 1, the model accounts for 87% of the variance associated with satisfaction.

The fit statistics are sufficient basis for the model’s acceptance as shown in Table 2. The Standardised Regression Weights (SRW) and Critical ratios indicate that there are significant relationships between Total Satisfaction and the seven latent variables with scores for Education 0.26 (8.68), Economic Factors .24 (5.84), Image .19 (7.04), Social Orientation 0.17 (5.03), Technology .16 (5.90), Accommodation .15 (4.67), and Safety 0.08 (2.46). The Squared Multiple Correlations (SMC) indicates acceptable statistics with all variables showing correlations above an acceptable level of 0.30 (Holmes-Smith et al. 2005) (See Table 1). All regression coefficients were significant.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS
Seven constructs were identified in the study: Education, Social, Technology, Economic, Accommodation, Safety, Prestige and Image. The structural equation modelling indicated that these factors are significant predictors of student satisfaction.

The Education construct highlights the fact that feedback from lecturers, good access to lecturers and quality of teaching are perceived to be the most important variables influencing student satisfaction. McManus (2006) found that universities need to understand student expectations in these areas to provide them with a suitable learning environment. Given the student diversity, universities will need to adapt teaching methods to include non traditional teaching techniques to cater to the specific pedagogical demands of international students (Davies, 2007). Geall (2000) provides evidence of how feedback to students is important given that interaction with lecturers is considered to be an important part of the learning experience and lecturers are accepted as the regular point of contact for all international students. Students therefore expect easy access to lecturers to discuss not only their academic issues but also seek direction on personal issues even before they consult a student counsellor.

It is vital that universities recognise the importance of factors other than direct educational issues, that impact upon the satisfaction of international students. These include issues relating to Accommodation, Safety, Economic considerations. Social issues, Technology availability and the image and prestige of the university.

The Counselling services, social activities, close working relationships with other students and international orientation programs are considered most important variables within the Social
FIGURE 1
Structural Equation Model of Student Satisfaction

TABLE 1
Results of the Student satisfaction model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latent Variable</th>
<th>Measured Variable</th>
<th>SRW</th>
<th>SMC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Valuable feedback from lecturers. Good access to lecturers High standard of teaching with quality lecturers</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Orientation</td>
<td>Counselling services</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social activities</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Close working relationships with all students</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>International orientation programs</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Considerations</td>
<td>Casual jobs</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cost of living</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunities for migration</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lifestyle</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image and Prestige</td>
<td>Image and prestige internationally</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Image and prestige in Australia</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Image and prestige in home country</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Access to computer facilities</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Availability of modern facilities</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>Reasonable cost</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good standard</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All variables loaded with Critical Ratios>2, therefore significant above .05
TABLE 2
Standardised estimates for the model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>SRW¹</th>
<th>S.E.²</th>
<th>C.R.³</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>8.68</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>5.90</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>5.84</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>7.04</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SRW¹=Standardised Regression Weight, S.E.²=Standardised Estimate C.R.³=Critical Ratio

construct that influence student satisfaction. Many Asian international students go through stress and adjustment difficulties during the initial period of their enrolment at a university and therefore student counselling services play a major role in student social welfare. Dunn (2001) found that students are likely to face a ‘culture shock’ given the new environment in the university chosen. Houston and Rees (1999) have provided evidence on adjustment problems related to both living support and language among postgraduate international students. Student orientation programs also play an important part of the support services required by students as many consider that such programs are of immense value to them.

Within the economic considerations construct, migration opportunities casual jobs, and cost of living, are considered the most important variables. Australia allows international students to work up to 20 hours a week and almost all international students take advantage of this facility. However, securing a part time/casual job is not easy for many students, particularly for newly arrived students. Burke (1986) found that the lack of opportunities for part time casual jobs is a concern to many students. This appears to be a concern among the postgraduate students. Most of the postgraduate students have been in the workforce in their own countries and therefore expect to find a part time/casual jobs in the area of interest in which they are professionally qualified. The negative experience resulting from the failure to secure such positions impacts on the overall satisfaction of students.

In regard to accommodation, International students expect student accommodation to be made available by universities or by private agencies to comply with minimum standards of comfort and at reasonable cost. It is also an expectation that such student accommodation is available when required. Few studies make direct reference to accommodation as a factor. Townley (2001) identifies accommodation with food and not as a separate factor while Harvey (2001) rates it as an important factor influencing student satisfaction.

Most postgraduate courses require constant use of computers. Some subjects require computer applications and analysis, and the presence of modern and adequate computer facilities enhances the attractiveness of universities among students. International students expect reasonably modern computer equipment, in adequate quantities to be made available for their use when required. High expectations are formed by students, given the promises made by universities through their promotional material and local agents or consultants in regard to the availability of core facilities such as computer equipment. Harvey (2001) considers this variable to be important in the formation of student satisfaction.

Access to computer laboratories is also another key expectation. This is related to the previous factor and plays a key role in the satisfaction formation of students (Harvey, 2001). One of the key recommendations of the Dearing Committee in the United Kingdom and the West Committee in Australia in 1997 is the introduction of technology in teaching termed as ‘resource based learning’ in which ‘access’ to resources is a pre-requisite. This recommendation is part of the reforms to university structure, teaching strategies and other academic activities to enable the institutions to cope with new challenges in the UK and in Australia. The easy access to computer labs, therefore, becomes a service expected by students enrolled at universities.

Safety is a major concern to international students and their families. Australia has a good reputation with safety particularly when compared to the US European destinations with regard to violence and drug usage over teenagers (AEI, 2002). Parents are worried about it because they will not have much control over their children when they are far away from them. According to the Australian Government, crime rate in the country decreased by 7% between 2000 and 2004 (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2005). This is a very positive thing for Australian Universities. Racial tolerance and acceptance as well as the cultural mix are also considered from a safety perspective and Australia compares very favourably with other countries on these factors.

International students are becoming more critical when choosing their educational institutions (Binsardi and Ekwulugo, 2003). Anderson and Sullivan (1993) note that expectations and perceived quality are significant factors affecting the satisfaction of international students. Thus, some higher education institutions have changed their quality management to convey a stronger quality image (Ford et al, 1999). The choice of an Australian university is also influenced by its image and prestige. The expectations formed are based on the information gathered about the university, its courses, teachers and comparative ranking with other universities. Some universities have built up a reputation for certain academic

High international image and prestige of a university is an attraction to postgraduate students as it is expected that such image and prestige would open up better career opportunities for them. Gaining international image and prestige as an educational institution is a long and arduous process requiring a commitment to excellence in the delivery of education, and quality research output.

Most students believe some Australian universities enjoy high image and prestige among Asian countries. Mullins et al (1995); Nesdale et al (1995) and the Bureau of Industry Economics (1989) discussed this factor in their studies investigating choice of study destination by international students highlighting that the attraction of a university lies with its reputation in the home country as a recognized institution. Opinions of students differ as the recognition of an institution is partly based on the strength and capacity of the university to deliver what is expected. The diversity of courses, reputation of its teachers and the strength of the alumni population in the home country of a given university are some of the factors contributing to image and prestige of an institution.

This study has highlighted the importance of teaching quality and the role of the teaching staff in generating student satisfaction. It was evident that lecturers remained the primary contact of the students for both academic and non-academic issues. While the continuous review of academic programs in terms of their content and quality and the international research profile of the universities is a major requirement, it is clear that universities need to recognise the contribution made by the academic staff in terms of student retention and satisfaction with the study destination. It is important that appropriate recognition of their contribution to support these intrinsic goals is a given to staff.

While universities have invested heavily on student support programs—counselling, orientation programs, and social activities the study reveals that the Asian international postgraduate students display a different attitude towards these services. First they endorse that these services as very important to them as noted by the earlier work undertaken by Kohut (1997) who identified a number of initiatives that would allow international students to interact socially with peers as well as the society at large with a view to enrich student experience. Many international students consider interaction with students of other nationalities, university lecturers, administrators, and the local community as part of their learning experience. Secondly, being relatively more mature age students than undergraduate student, the nature of the counselling, orientation programs and other social activities and timing are considered very important considerations by these students. It is important therefore for universities to tailor these services to suit the international postgraduate students.

A similar requirement is evident in relation to social and cultural support. There is a large body of literature on the adjustment problems and academic stress of international students and the importance of adequate support to minimize the “cultural shock” (Drucker, 1997). Past studies (Arambewela, 2003) have indicated that university counsellors or advisers are not always their first choice of seeking advice and redress; rather they turn to the lecturers or their own friends and relatives. In this context, creation of a suitable environment whereby students are able to interact with their lecturers, friends and relatives will be important. It is useful to seek volunteers from senior students to be hosts of the new students who enter the university.

In conclusion, this study provides a valuable insight into factors that relate to the satisfaction of international students. These include both educational and non-educational factors. This study should provide an opportunity for universities to develop strategies to attract and to satisfy international students.

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Enhancing Social Experiences to Build Brand Image

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Consumption experiences have attracted great attention from different fields: consumer research, marketing management, brand management, retailing and so forth. Today, managers and practitioners widely regard the creation of experiences for consumers as an important managerial tool, in order to catch their attention and differentiate strategically from competitors.

Companies can create highly valuable experiences for their customers by using a broad range of operational tools, especially devised to produce emotions and involvement. This paper focuses on one of these elements, events, which by definition provide participants with emotional and cognitive holistic experiences, by plunging people into complex multisensory and social contexts (Schmitt, 1999). During events, consumers are truly immersed in a social consumption situation which can be planned and defined in great detail, according to brand values. Events indeed provide an opportunity for companies to engage in face-to-face interactions with consumers and let them get involved in its brands and community, by creating a social setting helping attendees raising their involvement level (Close, Finney, Lacey, Sneath, 2006). Events are therefore considered the best marketing tool to increase ROI, after direct mail (Source: Business Week, 2005).

Nowadays events have been growing considerably as a desired promotional tactic (Sneath, Finley, Close, 2005). Moreover, events strongly engage customers in the level of their personal interests and concerns (Source: Jack Morton, 2006). Despite the widely acknowledged opportunities created by events in relation to brand image, there is a lack of literature on the measurement of their effectiveness. Neither management practice nor research has established clear objectives for event marketing and a formal rating of their efficacy (Javalgi, Gross, Traylor and Lampman, 1994). The most common measure to evaluate the success of any event is attendance, which does not take into consideration whether the event actually delivered the specific message the firm wanted to put over—the specific experiential goal—and it is therefore clearly unsuitable to explain the impact of the experience undergone by participants on the perceived brand positioning (Gartner and Lime, 2000). We intend to fill this gap, and propose that in order to investigate the effectiveness of events, changes in brand positioning must also be measured. Specifically, we have analyzed the effects of an event designed to be highly experiential as it creates intense social relationships between participants, in order to contribute effectively to the building of brand image. To this purpose, we have introduced new ways of testing the effectiveness of consumers’ participation in a highly social and experiential event in building brand positioning. In particular, we have run a field experiment structured as a before after design with control group (Ryals and Wilson, 2005), aiming at measuring the impact of experiential marketing investments in events on enhancing brand image. To test the different hypothesis structural equation models are used.

The experiment undertaken demonstrates that events can contribute to brand positioning actions, since they are able to convey clear, straightforward messages and to lay the ground for more sophisticated, complex and repeated communication. Moreover, the analysis confirms how events can be a very helpful tool for companies that want to get in touch with their customers and create experiences in which consumers can be directly involved.

Our findings show that emotions such as happiness and love, as well as actual involvement in the activity, are important drivers of consumers’ brand attitude and the most functionalist dimension of positioning. Social events emerge as a powerful tool to convey communicative messages. The individual social orientation plays a relevant but not crucial role in shaping people’s experience at the event, allowing involvement and permeability to the message also for people who are not socially prone. This study introduces a new measurement method of the impact of events on brand image according to an experiential framework, leading to a greater understanding of the factors influencing the success of events, that can be useful to plan future campaigns specifically targeted to create social experiences for the audience.

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Confessions of a Movie-Fan: Introspection into a Consumer’s Experiential Consumption of ‘Pride and Prejudice’

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ABSTRACT

As people enjoy movies for various reasons, this paper is taking an existential-phenomenological perspective to discuss the consumption of movies as a holistic personal lived experience. By using subjective personal introspection, the author provides hereby insights into his personal lived consumption experiences with the recently released movie Pride & Prejudice. Although the introspective data suggest that a complex tapestry of interconnected factors contributes to a consumer’s movie enjoyment, this study found a consumer’s personal engagement with the movie narrative and its characters to be of particular importance. This personal engagement not only allows for a momentary escape from reality into the imaginative movie world, but is even further enhanced through intertextuality, by which the consumer connects the movie to one’s personal life experiences.

INTRODUCTION

Probably like most other people, I have enjoyed watching movies since my early childhood for the hedonic pleasure value that they provide (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). But for me movies are much more than merely another form of entertainment. In fact, my fascination with movies meets Bloch’s (1986: 539) definition of product enthusiasm, where the product (in this case: movies) plays an important role and source of excitement and pleasure along sensory and aesthetic dimensions in a consumer’s life. The experiential consumption of movies provides me with an exciting way to escape the everyday reality of a routinised, boring and lonely life. In addition to giving me the chance to live out my hopes, dreams and fantasies in my mind (Green, Brock and Kaufman 2004), movies present me with a source of inspiration for pursuing a better way of life. Indeed, an individual’s consumption and subsequent enjoyment of movies can therefore vary from mere short-term entertainment to the experience of complete immersion into the movie narrative (Green et al. 2004) and identification with movie characters (Cohen 2001).

Yet, when reviewing the literature on movie consumption, one must inevitably conclude that the subjective contribution the consumption of movies makes to an individual consumer’s life is still not fully understood. This scant attention may result from marketing’s primary interest in the economic dimensions of movie consumption, where the focus is often limited to box office performances or the sales and rentals of DVDs in specified markets (Hennig-Thurau, Walsh and Bode 2004). In doing so, movie consumption is usually reduced to the mere purchase of individual tangible media formats (the “packaging”) rather than investigated as the actual consumption of the movie as an intangible brand in itself (Basil 2001; Krugman and Gopal 1991). Although film studies have always shown a theoretical interest in the effects that movies may have on their audiences, audience-response theory usually involves expert viewers trying to show how an imagined, idealised viewer would respond to movie texts and the cinematic experience by assuming probable expectations, motives and prior knowledge (Hirschman 1999; Mulvey 1999). A synthesis of ideas from linguistics, semiotics, psychoanalysis, Marxism and feminism has hereby created the image of a passive viewer, who is vulnerable to the manipulative qualities of the cinematic movie experience (Phillips 2003). Furthermore, expert viewers have also often discussed audience responses as a means to advance their own political-ideological agenda (see Mulvey 1999 as a good example).

Narrative transportation theory (Green et al. 2004; Rapp and Gerrig 2006), however, has presented in recent years an exciting alternative in media studies for understanding media enjoyment. Despite being primarily applied to reading, this theory suggests that enjoyment can benefit from the experience of being immersed in a narrative world through cognitive, emotional and imagery involvement, as well as from the consequences of that immersion, which include emotional connections with characters and self-transformations (Green et al. 2004: 311). Transportation is hereby seen as an active process by which the consumer seeks to be taken away from the everyday life into narrative worlds, where one could experience a different self and connect empathetically with media characters like real friends (Green and Brock 2000). However, by following strictly the behaviourist paradigm, the theory was only tested in controlled laboratory experiments (Green and Brock 2000; Rapp and Gerrig 2006), whose artificial designs showed little resemblance to consumers’ real life experiences. Thus, the question remains whether there is any evidence for transportation theory in consumers’ real movie consumption experiences. My aim is therefore to provide alternative insights into a consumer’s holistic movie consumption experience from an existential-phenomenological perspective. By using subjective personal introspection, I will describe and examine my own personal lived experiences in relation to the movie Pride & Prejudice (Dir.: Joe Wright, UK 2005) and how I connected the movie to my personal life experiences.

METHODOLOGY

Unfortunately, I have to disappoint all those readers who are now expecting hard, scientific evidence on movie consumption that has been obtained in hypothetico-deductive methods. But in order to understand movie consumption as a holistic phenomenological experience (Thompson, Locander and Pollio 1989), it requires a research method that allows for an easy, unlimited 24-hour access to an insider’s ongoing lived experience with the phenomenon, while not having to wrestle with ethical concerns regarding the informant’s privacy (Brown 1998; Holbrook 1995). Therefore, I will provide insights into my own lived consumption experiences with the recently released movie Pride & Prejudice by using subjective personal introspection (SPI). Holbrook (1995, 1987, 1986) introduced SPI 20 years ago as an approach in consumer research that, as an extreme form of participant observation, focuses on impressionistic narrative accounts of the writer’s own private consumption experiences (Holbrook 2003: 45). SPI, therefore, lends itself perfectly to the purpose of this paper, as it allows me to obtain first-hand data of one particular consumer’s experiential consumption of a movie (in this case Pride & Prejudice) from the privileged perspective of a “real” insider. Although SPI has been criticised in the past by neo-positivists and several interpretivists alike in a heated debate about its scientific justification (Brown 1998; Gould 1995; Holbrook 1995; Wallendorf and Brucks 1993), I will not add further to the philosophical debate on SPI’s virtues and limitations at this point in time. However, I will address some of the concerns voiced by Wallendorf and Brucks (1993) that are of particular relevance to the current study.
Wallendorf and Brucks (1993) argued that the reconstructive nature of long-term memory would distort the retrospective recall of events due to knowledge obtained in the intervening time. They also feared that data specificity is compromised by the danger of reporting generalised inferences rather than specific instances and voiced concerns about the extent to which the introspective data are recorded and accessible to others. For this research, I have collected my lived experiences as contemporaneous data while they occurred in real time to ensure high accuracy of the data. Contemporaneous introspective data field the unique advantage of providing a large pool of emotional data, such as personal feelings, thoughts, daydreams, fantasies and creativity, that would be inaccessible to any other research method that is based on retrospective recall or pure observation and, as a result, inevitably be lost forever. To ensure data accessibility for external review, I have recorded the data systematically, unfiltered and on the spot in a specifically assigned diary (Patterson 2005) as part of much larger introspective data collection. The following essay represents a summary from the diary based on a total of approx. 20,000 relevant hand-written words as raw data collected from July 2005 to February 2006. Taking an existential-phenomenological perspective (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Thompson et al. 1989), the emphasis is placed hereby less on the recollection of factual behaviour during my consumption of Pride & Prejudice but much more on my private lived experiences (i.e. feelings, thoughts, fantasies or daydreams) as THE essential elements of my experiential consumption of this movie. My co-author reviewed the diary separately to ensure that my essay and the subsequent interpretations truly reflect the recorded data. But because some of the emotional data were recorded in the “heat of the moment”, I took the liberty to rephrase them in order not to cause unnecessary offence.

MY EXPERIENTIAL CONSUMPTION OF PRIDE & PREJUDICE

Over the summer of 2005, I became a fan of the very talented, young actress Jena Malone. While browsing through her film listings on the IMDb website, I learned that she is playing the role of Lydia Bennet in the forthcoming new cinema version of Pride & Prejudice. The film was due to be released on 16th September and would present me with the opportunity to see Jena Malone for the first time on the big screen. As she primarily features in high quality independent movies such as Donnie Darko or Saved, whose releases for commercial reasons are often restricted to arthouse cinemas (especially in Europe), I was so far only able to watch her movies as DVDs on my laptop. However, I must admit that I would probably not have cared about Pride & Prejudice at all, if Jena Malone had not played a role in it. In fact, back then I was never even tempted to read Jane Austen’s famous novel, because, a long time ago, I had the misfortune to watch the highly praised and critically acclaimed BBC TV version with Colin Firth. While many people still regard it as the ultimate screen version of Jane Austen’s beloved novel and as the benchmark for all screen versions yet to come, my own opinion differs slightly. To be honest, I think it’s rubbish! Like most British period dramas (especially those made for TV by the BBC), I found this film to be a completely clichéd glorification of a nostalgic past that for sure has never existed in this form—except maybe in the imagination of a desperately bored housewife. But, who knows, that might be the reason why so many female viewers saw in Colin Firth the ultimate personification of their Mr Darcy? The acting standard is on par with that of Coronation Street (a popular British TV soap opera), while the characters are so one-dimensional that the only thing missing is a sign on the shoulder stating their name and dominant personality trait—just in case the viewer hasn’t noticed. Personally, I couldn’t care less about any of the portrayed characters.

On Sunday, July 31st, I saw that the Sunday Times featured an article about the forthcoming Pride & Prejudice movie in its Culture supplement. In the hope of also finding something written about Jena Malone I bought the Sunday Times for the first time ever. But to my big disappointment, there wasn’t one single word about Jena—just about leading actress Keira Knightley and director Joe Wright! The article itself, though, was actually very well and interestingly written by Joanna Briscoe (2005). First of all, she shared my opinion of the BBC TV version and ensured me that I’m no longer the only one with a strong inherent dislike for it. But more importantly, by placing Jane Austen’s novel in the context of her time, Briscoe argued that all previous small and big screen versions have placed the novel in the wrong period for mainly stylistic and glamorous reasons (One that is more in line with a romanticised nostalgic past rather than with the lived reality of Jane Austen’s time!) and subsequently altered inevitably the understanding of the narrative and its societal background. In contrast, Briscoe (2005) regarded the coming movie as much more realistic than any of its predecessors, because it bypasses all the previous traditional Regency-lite conventions of a painterly tableau of empire-line dresses, sotto voce ballroom squeals and high-ceilinged elegance of the annoying BBC version. In fact, rather than in 1813, when the book was published, director Joe Wright located the new movie in the Georgian time of 1797, when Jane Austen actually wrote the initial draft of the novel, and recreated the rural life of the gentry accordingly. More impressively, in order to ensure realism, Joe Wright prohibited the actresses from wearing any make-up that wasn’t available in the 1790s. Surely, this decision must have pissed off Hollywood’s MaxFactor make-up artists, who are famous for their stylistic involvement in all glamorous, pseudo-historic Hollywood blockbusters. But I had no doubt in my mind that the actresses would look more beautiful in their natural appearance than any of the MaxFactor-styled glamour girls from the ads!

All in all, the article captured my interest for the movie! In fact, an internal excitement and expectation was mounting up. As a form of release, I went to the local bookstore the next day and bought a newly released copy of Jane Austen’s novel, which “by coincidence” already featured the coming movie’s poster artwork on the cover. As I read the book over the coming weeks, the story and its many characters grabbed me more and more. However, it must be noted that my personal reading of the novel differed increasingly from the stiff and over-indulged interpretation of the dreadful BBC TV version I saw before. I couldn’t wait any longer for the movie’s release and started counting the days down to September 16th in early September, something else happened in my personal life. After several months of struggling, I finally had the courage to ask a certain girl out for a date. Due to a string of bad experiences in the past, I’m very shy and have a low self-esteem when it comes to making the first step and conversing easily with women I’m attracted to. Thus, this was a very big step for me. I wanted to make the date as romantic and memorable as possible. And what could be more romantic than sitting next to each other in a dark cinema and watching a romantic movie like Pride & Prejudice, whose story has been loved by women for centuries? While I was looking in excitement forward to our date on next Saturday, TV ads were announcing the Irish and UK wide release of the movie for coming Friday. On Sunday, September 11th, I bought the Sunday Times a second time, because the Culture-magazine featured this time a detailed article about Jena Malone (see Photo 1). As this is the first “real” article on Jena in an Irish/UK publication I’m aware of, I was totally delighted! On Wednesday, I watched the news enthusiastically.
in order to see glimpses from the Pride & Prejudice Dublin premiere. Jena Malone even appeared for 30 seconds on a short TV3 news report! Overall, the critics for the movie were surprisingly good. Not that I care much about them, but it’s reassuring...

But then followed the major disappointment! The Irish-wide release of Pride & Prejudice was for some mysterious reasons restricted to Dublin, Cork and Limerick only. After all the promotional build up, my growing personal expectations and my internal excitement, this no-show was very frustrating! With the initial plan for my first date in shatters, we both went on to see Cinderella Man instead. I was so frustrated that I spent half the movie wondering whether there is too much salt in the popcorn or too less popcorn in the salt. After some careful deliberations I came to the conclusion that the latter must have obviously been the case. Unfortunately, the date didn’t work out the way I was hoping for either. As I returned to my usual, unexciting daily life as an unwilling, lonely single, I was hoping that Pride & Prejudice would be released the next week in my town as well. After all, it was just topping the box office. And indeed, the movie was finally released in all other areas in Ireland with only one exception—the area where I lived in. As I tried phoning the cinema to enquire their plans for showing Pride & Prejudice, I was only connected to a tape that gave me the current programme I already knew and allowed for automated bookings, but not for human enquiries. The website provided exactly the same information. Have they never heard of customer service? Thus, I tried to enquire directly at the cinema and experienced real-life relationship marketing in practice. Instead of being treated as a valued customer, I was just unfriendly repudiated by a bored, disinterested employee behind safety glass who told me that “they don’t know because all decisions are made by the Dublin headquarters” and that “there is no way of finding out”. In fact, he claimed that they don’t even have a contact number to call their headquarters! Obviously, I was already extremely disappointed that I couldn’t watch the movie. But this openly expressed disregard for their customers frustrated me even more. I felt so angry and helpless that I couldn’t concentrate on anything for the rest of the day!

One week later, Pride & Prejudice was finally released in Waterford as well. An exciting kind of happiness mixed with anticipation or even joy to finally see Jena Malone on the big screen went through my entire body and filled it with a kind of warmth. I couldn’t wait any longer and needed to see the film! Thus, I packed up all my things and went off to the cinema. It was worth the wait, because Pride & Prejudice is simply a magnificent movie that you can watch over and over again. And for the record this movie is by far superior to all its predecessors and in particular to the dull but popular BBC TV version. The movie never gets boring and is just a joy to watch-beautiful landscape pictures a la Lord of the Rings combined with nice camera frames that outline the England of the 1790s. All actors did a great job in making every single character appear to be real and believable. Deep in my heart I can feel the way they feel and know why they do what they do. It doesn’t even matter whether you sympathise with them or dislike them. In fact, Pride & Prejudice as a story really plays with judgement errors made by first impressions (the original title of the novel). At the end, there aren’t really any good or bad guys—only humans.

The only exception is Mr Wickham who represents the typical handsome, smooth talking guy girls are always falling for. Men like him know how to be the centre of attention and how to attract women. But behind their pretty masks and smooth words, those “mercenaries” (Ironically, Wickham is a lieutenant with a travelling regiment.) are often shallow, arrogant and selfish cowards, who don’t care for anyone else but themselves. Yet, while decent, honest men (like me) can easily look through their fog of deception, women still always seem to fall for them and simply turn a blind eye to the falseness in their cheap words. Obviously, I’m a bit jealous of their permanent, undeserved success with the ladies. Every time when a girl that I fancy ignores me and instead falls for the false charm of another Wickham, I have this painful feeling of heartache and powerlessness simultaneously running through my entire body. But it just hurts even more, when the same girls, once their Wickham leaves them in misery, are then quick to blame ALL men instead of their own self-imposed ignorance. Poor Lydia will soon learn this lesson as well! Maybe this is also why I sympathised rather than laughed at Mr Collins? Because Tom Hollander did an excellent job in portraying Mr Collins exactly as I have imagined him while reading the novel, seeing him on screen made me feel much better about myself. I know that I’m not very handsome and women usually don’t notice me, but I’m pretty sure that I can never be THAT dull and boring for anyone! I got a confidence boost just by realising that! Nevertheless, I also felt empathy for him, as I have experienced many times how it feels like to find yourself being ignored or even laughed at by the females you fancy—just because you are unable to make interesting conversation.

I empathised even more with Mr Darcy, the central male character, because like me he is uncomfortable in interacting with people he doesn’t know—especially with women. And similar to my personal experiences, his introvert behaviour and insecurity is interpreted by the ladies (and other people) as arrogance, pride and incivility, which leads to their prejudices and dislike of him. In his excellent portrayal, Matthew Macfadyen lets his Mr Darcy look dislikeable in an involuntary and passive fashion, whose real character must be discovered by the audience in the same way as Elisabeth does by looking behind the prejudices that resulted from first impressions. His interpretation differed significantly from Colin Firth’s rather theatrical performance. I could especially identify myself with Darcy’s internal struggle in trying to talk to Elisabeth and to show his affections to her, which always results in forced mimics and in saying the wrong words at the wrong time. Of course, this only supports her prejudices against him. It happens to me all the time and only reinforces my personal insecurities. Thus, I share Mr Darcy’s loneliness, his inner struggle and disappointments, but also his hopes and dreams to be seen as the person he really is— at least by the woman he loves. However, Mr Darcy has two advantages that at least attract some female interest: he is rich and handsome and I’m neither! But otherwise the internal similarities in character are striking. I just hope that at one point in time I will be rewarded like he was at the end.

As a male consumer I’m obviously much more interested in the female characters and the actresses who personify them. The main female characters are Elisabeth (Keira Knightley) and Jane Bennet (Rosamund Pike). Jane is the good-hearted oldest daughter who always sees the best in anyone and is said to be the most attractive girl in the county. Although she surely is beautiful, she isn’t really my type. Elisabeth would be more interesting to me due to her wit and free spirit. Keira Knightley delivers probably her best performance to-date in bringing this character to life. I was particularly stunned by how closely Elisabeth resembles many women I have met so far in the way she responded to the different types of men represented by Mr Darcy, Mr Collins and Mr Wickham. To each of them she responded with prejudice that was based on her first impression of their physical and social appearances rather than on their actual personalities. I find it quite ironic that women, in my personal experience, always criticise men for judging them on their physical beauty (Which is true!), while they do exactly the same thing (Which is only fair!). Yet, they still claim to look only for the
inner values in men. However, Elisabeth at least tries to change her prior judgements.

As a Jena Malone fan, I obviously paid particular attention to her character of Lydia Bennet, the youngest daughter. Although I must admit that I’m biased, Jena did an outstanding job in portraying Lydia as a rather wild, over-romantic 15-year old girl with an obsession for fashion, dancing and officers—in short as the typical spoiled teenager of today and back then. Lydia is young, naïve and just romantically in love with love itself rather than any particular man, which ultimately leads her into trouble, when Wickham tempts her into having underage sex outside marriage. Though Wickham is forced to marry her, she is too naïve to see that he only wanted to exploit her youthful beauty and innocence for little more than a one-night stand. I feel really sorry for Lydia when she finds out that Wickham never cared for her. He will soon treat her badly and betray her with other women. However, Jena Malone looks incredible, attractive and sexy in her Georgian-style dresses. She is a real natural beauty to fall in love with and doesn’t need any MaxFactor styling. But then again, I’m biased!

Still, Mary Bennet (Talulah Riley) is the female character I most emphasised with, as she is very shy, introvert and lonely—just like me. She is also said to be only ordinary looking and less beautiful than Jane and Elisabeth. Yet, I find her to be much more attractive than her sisters. In order to find her place, Mary consistently tries to be the perfect daughter to her parents by wanting to fulfil all the cultural expectations that society has held for women in that time. But no matter how hard she tries, all her efforts go unnoticed by her parents, sisters, relatives and men alike. Thus, Mary seeks her happiness in playing the pianoforte and singing. While in one particular scene the whole Bennet family is gathered for breakfast at the table, Mary takes hers at the pianoforte. Subsequently, she is very enthusiastic about grasping her chance to shine by singing and playing at Mr Bingley’s ball. Unfortunately, while she is a relatively good player on the pianoforte, Mary’s voice can’t hold a note and her performance ends in a total disaster. Everybody’s laughing at her until her father finally stops her. I could really feel how hurt and heartbroken she is. So much that I would have liked to comfort her! But instead I’ve to sit lonely in the cinema and watch her leave on her own crying and feeling sadly alone again. On the next day it got even worse for Mary, because she was probably the only person in the family who would have settled for marrying Mr Collins. As Jane was “unavailable” and Elisabeth rejected him, Mary was sure that, as the third daughter, it would now be her turn. Although anything wasn’t said either in the film or in the novel, I could read it in her face (Excellent acting by Talulah Riley!). Instead, Mr Collins ignores her by marrying Elisabeth’s friend Charlotte Lucas.

All in all, watching Pride & Prejudice was a really great experience, which exceeded my expectations and was worth the wait and excitement. The only bad thing was that I had to change my perfect seat in the cinema because two middle-aged ladies couldn’t keep their mouths shut for just one single minute and stop commenting every single scene. Why is each time I go to the cinema at least one ignorant person somehow determined to ruin my movie experience? Nevertheless, I simply knew that I would watch the film soon again, which was already the case during the following week. As I’m an involuntary single for years and don’t have any hope of being in a loving relationship in the nearer future, I felt lonely, sad and depressed and were simply unable to concentrate on my work. Thus, I left my desk early and drifted towards the cinema. My choice fell on Pride & Prejudice once again, because I knew that it would be good for rescuing my emotional well-being. This time there wasn’t anybody around trying to spoil it for me, which was really great! Although my impressions from the first viewing were all confirmed, this time I paid even more attention to Jena Malone, who really owns the screen with her charm, even when she is only in the background of the frame. Despite her young age, she has already shown that she is an excellent actress with a great future. It just required her smile, her eyes and her presence to raise my spirits and to make me feel warm and happy. The film itself also made me feel much better about myself and relaxed again. I think I was even smiling for the first time that day…

But my experiential consumption of Pride & Prejudice didn’t stop with the two visits to the cinema. In fact, they were just the beginning. Over the next months, I started to acquire a number of collectibles on eBay (see Photo 2). However, as a devoted Jena Malone fan, I have focused my financial resources on purchasing autographed movie photos of her as Lydia, which she has personally signed while performing in the Broadway play Doubt. Although my whole Jena Malone collection is very dear to me, her original autographed photos are my most valued treasures. The only thing missing for most of the time was the opportunity to add Pride & Prejudice to my movie (and my Jena Malone) collection. I waited impatiently and nervously for the official DVD release, which finally came on February 6th 2006. The advantage of DVDs lies not only in the picture and sound quality, but also in the extra bonus features. On the Pride & Prejudice DVD, the bonus features range from the alternative US ending to galleries of the 19th century to a number of short behind-the-scenes documentaries. Of course, my prime interest was in those documentaries that featured Jena Malone in front of and behind the camera. Thus, I love to watch The Bennets and The Politics of Dating in 18th Century England, which include movie scenes with Jena Malone as Lydia Bennet, show her in her private clothes during the rehearsals and feature a short interview with her. But I enjoy in particular watching the On Set Diaries, in which Jena Malone, Talulah Riley and the rest of the cast talk in private about their personal experiences while filming the movie and the close bonds they have developed before and behind the camera. It’s heart-warming to see how they have become the “Bennet family” even off the screen, leaving me with the desire to be part of this perfect family bond. Another beauty of the documentary is that the actors and actresses are shown in private as natural, lovely people like you and me. The documentary has increased my admiration for Jena Malone even more. But more importantly, I love to watch this movie as one of my favourites!

DISCUSSION

The introspective data obtained from my private holistic lived experience of consuming Pride & Prejudice reveals some very interesting findings for further discussion. First of all, while previous marketing studies on movie consumption (Basil 2001; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004; Krugman and Gopal 1991) focused primarily on the attractiveness and commercial success of individual media formats, the data clearly shows that my interest was purely in the movie Pride & Prejudice itself and not its respective “packaging” and that I consumed the movie in absence of any rational trade-off decisions. The acquisitions of movie-related collectibles followed similar patterns. In relation to the social consumption context, past studies have argued that blockbuster movies would owe their popular appeal to the fact that they can be watched in the company of friends or family as collective entertainment (Basil 2001), while connoisseurs would enjoy movies as an individual experience for its artistic merits (Holbrook 1999). Although I intended to use Pride & Prejudice as background scenery for a first date, the data clearly indicates that I rather enjoy the hedonic experience of watching the movie alone for my own pleasure (Phillips 2003). This leads to the personal consumption context, which has been an area of interest in
film studies and refers to the viewer’s emotional state and motives for enjoying the possible effects the movie experience may have (Mulvey 1999).

Although the heated debate about movie effects on the audience is still ongoing (Oatley 1999; Rapp and Gerrig 2006), there is agreement that movies can act as means to compensate for perceived emotional deficits (Cohen 2001). The data confirms that *Pride & Prejudice* has served for me as a means to cheer myself up when I feel lonely, unloved and sad. However, another strong motivator for me to see the movie was also the fact that my favourite actress Jena Malone is starring it. Thus, being the fan of an actor, actress or even director significantly enhances a consumer’s viewing pleasure. Both the social and the personal consumption context hereby influence AND are influenced by the perceived atmosphere during the consumption of the movie. Because movie-fans aim to *loose themselves into the movie world* (Green et al. 2004), disruptions caused by noisy audience members or poor picture/sound quality have a serious impact on a consumer’s movie enjoyment, which is...
evidenced by my response to the two “talkative” ladies. The data further suggests that another important factor for a consumer’s movie experience is the excitement of anticipation and expectations long before actually watching the movie, which unfortunately received so far little attention in the literature. Indeed, it is such a powerful factor that the disappointment of unfulfilled expectations can have a strong negative impact on the consumer’s emotional state.

However, the major finding of this study is that the emotional engagement with the characters and their stories (Green et al. 2004) seems to be the most crucial element in a consumer’s movie experience. As my enjoyment of Pride & Prejudice derived from my ability to lose myself completely in the movie’s audiovisual imagination, the introspective data provides indeed strong support for the extension of Green and Brock’s (2000) transportation theory to movie narratives. According to Oatley (1999), personal engagement with literary characters and their stories can take with increasing level of transportation broadly three different forms. On the weakest level, a consumer merely sympathises with the characters (= feels with them) as a side-participant who likes them. On the next level, the consumer feels empathy for the character (= shares the character’s emotions) because of perceived similarities to one’s own private experiences. Finally, the consumer identifies and merges with the character (= feels the character’s emotions as one’s own) similar to an actor playing a role. Cohen (2001) made hereby a strong distinction between identification and imitation. While imitation means that a person extends one’s self-identity by copying a character’s behaviour and appearance, Cohen interpreted identification as a momentary mental role-play where the consumer (like an actor) imagines being the character in the story. Once the story ends, s/he moves on to experience the next character role. Despite viewing identification as the ultimate goal of loosing oneself in a book, Oatley (1999) denied this level to the movie experience by arguing that the person would always be aware that another actor already plays the role and hence could only sympathise with the character/actor as a side-participant (Rapp and Gerrig 2006).

Although I admit that it is difficult to become the movie character, my introspective data still suggests that I strongly empathised and at some occasions even identified myself with several characters. In fact, it seems not only to be possible for a consumer to identify under certain circumstances with a movie character, but I was also able to sympathise, empathise and even identify with more than one character during my Pride & Prejudice experience. Furthermore, while previous literature in media studies (Cohen 2001; Green and Brock 2000; Rapp and Gerrig 2006) focused mainly on consumer engagement with lead characters, the data shows that, apart from Mr Darcy, I actually empathised and even identified with several support characters (i.e., Mary, Mr Collins and Lydia). My personal engagement was further enhanced when I was able to make an intertextual connection between the experiences of the movie characters and my own private life experiences. Hirschman (2000) hereby distinguished between three types of intertextuality. Cross-text intertextuality describes consumers’ mental linkages across similar narratives/texts they have encountered. Apart from the obvious comparisons of this movie version with the previous BBC version and the original Jane Austen novel, I also likened the landscape pictures to those of the Lord of the Rings movies or use certain words from the movie in other situations. Nostalgic intertextuality refers to consumers’ mental linkages between a narrative/text and their ideas of a nostalgic past. While it might explain the popularity of the BBC version, there isn’t any evidence in my introspective data. Instead, the final important finding of this study is that out-of-text intertextuality enhanced my personal engagement with the movie and its characters.

Out-of-text intertextuality refers to consumers’ mental linkages between characters/narratives in a fictional text and actual people or life events in the real world, which could not only result in empathy but also identification with the fictional character. For example, I identified myself with Mr. Darcy because we both feel insecure in conversing easily with people we don’t know (especially females) and subsequently suffer from rejections and prejudices, while we deeply hope that the women we fancy finally see us as the persons we are. For similar reasons, I felt also partially empathic to Mr Collins, while I experienced hate and anger towards Mr Wickham as my perceived personification of all those men I have envied in the past for their success with women. Similarly, I saw Elisabeth as a personification of the females who rejected me in the past purely by judging my physical appearance. Interestingly, the data also provided evidence that contrary to previous scientific studies (Green and Brock 2000) not only female but also male consumers may experience empathy or even identify with characters across genders. As a result of the experienced intertextuality between Mary’s fictional emotions of feeling lonely, ignored and rejected and my personal real feelings of loneliness and rejection, I could feel Mary’s emotions as if they were my own ones. This may also be the reason why I felt more attracted to Mary than to the other female characters.

To conclude, movie consumption as a holistic consumption experience depends on a complex tapestry of interconnected factors through which the consumer can restore his/her emotional well-being by being momentarily immersed into an imaginative world. Of course, I don’t suggest that the presented introspective data and proposed findings could be generalised. But I believe that the subjective personal introspection of my experiential consumption of Pride & Prejudice offers a certain degree of transferability by actively involving the reader. Each time, you as the reader thought I know this feeling or I have had a similar experience, you actively engaged in what Hirschman (2000) called an Out-of-Text Intertextuality, by which you, the reader, connected my essay with your own personal life experiences, and thereby confirmed the transferability of the described phenomenon. But if it hasn’t happen for you, then I hope my idiosyncratic and narcissistic paper has at least made for some fun reading.

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Effects of Social Consumption on Individual Choice: Individual and Social Origins of Self-Control
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ABSTRACT

Often products are chosen by an individual, but consumed together with other people. This article explores the influence of social consumption on individuals' ability to exercise self-control. We introduce the concept of “experiential social effects” and demonstrate that people choose pleasure more often when the options are consumed socially than privately. We demonstrate that social indulgence results from the following two separate effects: (1) Individuals perceive others to be more pleasure oriented, but less self-controlled, than they actually are, and adjust their choices in the direction of these false perceptions, and (2) sharing the pleasure with others increases its utility.
SESSION SUMMARY
Consumer culture theorists have developed highly nuanced accounts of how consumers actively and creatively use narratives and meanings conveyed through brands, products, and servicescapes as resources for identity construction (Arnould, Price, and Tierney 1998; Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry 2003; Holt 2002; Holt and Thompson 2004; Kozinets 2001; Peñaloza 2001; Schouten and McAlexander 1995; Üstüner and Holt 2007). However, this research stream has given relatively little consideration to the production side of consumer culture and the tacit theories, goals, and competitive and ideological influences that shape the actions of commercial mythmakers.

One reason for this recurrent oversight is that consumer researchers have, in accordance with their defining disciplinary orientation, been most concerned with the consumer side of the consumer-producer dyad. A more ideologically driven rationale is that consumer researchers have often tacitly assumed the role of a theoretical counterpart to critical theorists who portray consumers as relatively passive dupes of the culture industry (See McCracken 1986). Rather, consumer researchers have aligned themselves with an active model of media reception (Scott 1994) and have accordingly, emphasized the ways in which consumers creatively and, at times critically, read the texts of commercial culture in relation to their own goals and life circumstances (Hirschman and Thompson 1997; Rishton and Elliott 1999; Scott 1994). This theoretical framing places power in the hands (and eyes and ears) of consumers while suggesting that commercial producers have relatively little control over how their message is actually decoded and understood; instead, they are merely interjecting additional symbolic resources into the grand pastiche of consumer culture. From this standpoint, consumers are, at minimum, co-creators of consumer culture, acting as bricoleurs (e.g., Thompson and Haytko 1997) and they often act in terms that are even more explicitly producerly creating their own forms of popular culture, now easily distributed through the democratizing sphere of Web 2.0 (Jenkins 2006).

Nonetheless, there are some exceptions to this general tendency to focus on the consumer side of co-creation. These studies attend more closely to how commercial culture, in its variegated forms, is actually produced and seeks to explicate the factors that influence these institutionally situated commercial agents (Holt 2002, 2004). In this spirit, for example, Cronin (2004) explores the different ways in which advertising research functions as a commercial currency that advertising practitioners and their clients differentially leverage to enhance their relative positions in a given relationship. Arguing against the critical view of advertising as a super efficient capitalist machine, Cronin (2004) concludes that the production of advertising campaigns is more contingent, hesitant, and reactive than commonly supposed. Advertising practitioners are embedded in shifting relations of power organized by competitive forces, conflicts between self-promotion aims and client interests, and idiosyncratic turf battles that emerge between account managers and brand managers on the client side.

Peñaloza (2000, 2001) also explores the production of commercial culture in her ethnography of Western stock shows. She highlights the ways in which ranchers and other key players in the beef supply chain enhance their market position by selectively leveraging the Old West mythology in ways that celebrate “the winners of the West, white rangers, and their rural way of life” and, in so doing, privilege meanings emanating from “white rural culture” (p. 395) while marginalizing the cultural positions of non-Whites. She further observes that consumers, as they move through the various promotional exhibits, often formulate resistant readings that run against the ideological grain of the representations. Nonetheless, consumers’ oppositional interpretations “demonstrate a disjointed structure and are constrained by the interests of beef marketers and producers” (Peñaloza 2001, p. 393).

Our special session expands on some key implications that follow from these studies. First, the ways in which commercial culture is actually produced, particularly in terms of servicescape stagings and ideological framing of identity, can predispose consumers toward certain perceptual and experiential orientations, including their oppositional readings. This shaping effect affirms the importance of attending more closely to the production side of commercial culture and explicating the historical, competitive, and ideological factors that influence the actions and choices of institutionally situated commercial producers. A related implication that is particularly germane to this special session is that commercial producers are neither fully in control of their actions nor are they necessarily acting in strict accord with predetermined ideological and persuasive goals. The papers in this session share a common orienting premise that commercial producers, like conventional consumers, are embedded in pre-existing historical, ideological, and socio-cultural structures and that their creations are negotiated within this nexus of constraints and resources.

In this sense, commercial producers are also co-creators who must draw from a pre-existing legacy of mythic meanings and their production are negotiated in relation to a shifting field of competitive contingencies, brand/organizational histories, and social and cultural conditions. The studies in this session all address the ways in which commercial productions designed for contemporary competitive and socio-cultural conditions are shaped by prior historical meanings, myths, and practices associated with the product or servicescape category. Each of these studies profile how commercial producers’ professional outlooks, decisions, and predilections are constituted within these historical networks and how their actions are channel by the intersections of history, competitive forces, and prevailing socio-cultural conditions.

The three presentations approach this common dynamic from differing perspectives and explore how these dialectical negotiations are manifested across different forms of cultural production. Accordingly, each presentation analyzes this relationship between cultural history and the actions of commercial producers in relation to distinctive theoretical questions related to 1) the staging of servicescapes and the intersection of local and global forms (Dannie Kjeldgaard and Jacob Ostberg); 2) the media construction of a mythologized regional identity and the efforts of commercial producers to manage problematic racial countermemories (Craig Thompson and Kelly Tian); and 3) the complex processes through which iconic brands function as ideological parasites whose actions also reciprocally shape the cultural meaning systems from which they draw inspiration and identity value (Douglas Holt).

This session addresses an important, largely overlooked, and paradoxical question of how the historical trajectories of commercial culture influence the production of new forms of commercial
culture. The papers in this session also advance new theorizations of commercial producers as agents who actively pursue their competitive goals while also being subjugated to ideological and mythological structures not of their own making. Within this common theoretical frame of reference, these presentations respectively explicate specific insights related to the experience economy, collective memories, and the cultural and identity functions of brand meanings. For this reason, this session should appeal a broad segment of the EACR audience. Each of these studies has been completed and each speaker has agreed to serve if the session is accepted.

Our discussant for this session will be Søren Askegaard. Professor Askegaard’s research has integrated issues related to the production of commercial meanings, the dynamics of globalization, consumer ideologies, and brand meanings. His background is ideally suited to discuss the production side issues explored in this session and the specific substantive theoretical contributions offered by each presentation.

PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS

“Coffee Grounds and the Global Culture in Scandinavia”

Dannie Kjeldgaard and Jacob Ostberg

This presentation explores the glocalization of consumer culture by analyzing the coffee servicescapes in Scandinavia. The presentation explores how the servicescapes, which are influenced by the hegemonic brandscape as outlined by Thompson and Arsel (2004) become glocalized in the Scandinavian context. The presentation shows that while the hegemonic brandscape stemming from Starbucks exerts a global structure of common difference on local coffee cultures across the globe, historically constituted global cultural flows institutionalized in local market contexts implies different competitive and positioning roles for Starbucks and the like through the presence of pre-existing coffee cultural styles. Furthermore, the presentation discusses how both historical and contemporary global flows of coffee culture have been shaped by a specific Scandinavian consumer culture that interacts with global structures in the process of glocalization. Coffee culture seems an eminently site of exploration as Scandinavia constitutes the world’s highest per capita consumption of coffee.

Our empirical investigations in Scandinavia, a cultural setting where Starbucks has yet not entered the market albeit gained significant cultural influence, show that there is a long-standing historically established coffee culture that exists in parallel to both a starbuckified coffee culture and a coffee connoisseurship culture. Our detailed analysis of this coffee servicescape illustrate that there is a plurality of cultural styles along which the different types of coffee establishments differ. At the same time, we show that there are tendencies toward the hegemonic influx of starbuckified dimensions suggested by Thompson and Arsel. We identify three ideal typical overall coffee cultural styles:

The first one we term Americana reflecting the recent global diffusion of the lactified coffee cultural consumption style most notably symbolized by Starbucks. The Americana coffee cultural style is heavily influenced by the coffee cultural ideals of Starbucks. As already mentioned, the dominant global player has yet to enter the Scandinavian market making room for plenty of simile brands that draw on the style originally laid out by Starbucks. According to an interview with the franchisee at an Espresso House in Lund, the owners of the Espresso House corporation travel to the US a couple of times a year just to visit Starbucks outlets and be inspired. They proudly announce that there is no difference whatsoever between Starbucks and the particular local variation of Espresso House and hence stress an authenticity that is grounded in the imitation of the global epitome. In addition to these simile brands a number of outlets such as restaurants, hot dog stands, and gas stations utilize the structure of common difference of the coffee shop menu.

The second coffee cultural style we term Culinaria which is a more recent tendency that stress authenticity in the form of exoticism and high quality. The cultural style of Culinaria makes references to a number of different types of authenticity. One type is through what is perceived as an indexical authenticity through a reference to place of origin, most notably Italian cafés but also French brasseries. The Culinaria category also house a different type of connoisseur café equally obsessed with authenticity but more eclectic in their inspiration than the Italian cafés described above. These places are a postmodern concoction of everything “authentic”, the menus are comprised of fascinating juxtapositions of elements from across the globe. Others emphasize authenticity by selling products of certain production methods such as organic and “politically correct” products. Rather than interpreting this refined culinary experience as an opposition to the influx of the starbuckified hegemonic consumptionscape we see it as part of a general gastronomic slow food movement not only opposing global standardized consumer culture but equally as much local consumer culture that has deteriorated gastronomic qualities.

“How Commercial Myths Compete for Identity Value through the Ideological Shaping of Collective Memories and Countermemories”

Craig Thompson and Kelly Tian

In his classic study Mythologies, Roland Barthes (1956/1972) defined popular myths as rhetorical systems that enshroud contemporary socio-cultural conditions in an aura of historical incontrovertibility and inevitability. According to Barthes (1956), popular myths work by glossing the consequences of historical contingencies, political conquests, and social conflicts as an essentialized and naturalized cultural order. This rhetorical reification allows unsettling questions about social stratifications and institutionalized inequities to simply “go without saying” (Barthes 1956, p. 143). Placing a Nietzschean spin on Barthes’ critical structuralism, Foucault (1977) conceptualized countermemories as the linguistic, material, socio-cultural, and institutional traces of contradictory historical narratives, powers struggles, fractious voices of protest and dissent, socio-political oppressions, and tactics of resistances. These countermemories can be obfuscated, but never fully erased, through the invocation of grand mythic narratives such as the triumph of good over evil, the taming of a wild and dangerous nature by the rationalizing forces of civilization, and the inexorable march of progress. A genealogical analysis aims to discern the nexus of countermemories that are subordinated to a mythic gloss and to explicate the ways in which these historical effacements have shaped specific (and often institutionally dominant) representations of collective memory (also see Giroux 1997; Lipsitz 1990; Haraway 1994).

The dynamic tensions that arise between countermemories and the commercial uses of myths are the focus of our genealogical analysis. In the age of postmodernity, commercial culture (i.e., advertisements, products, branding strategies, entertainment and infotainment media, tourist sites, servicescape stagings, and public relations) has become a very significant societal medium for the material representation of collective memories and their corresponding arrays of social identifications, symbolic distinctions, moral valuations, and implied status hierarchies (Marcoux and
commercial and ideological purposes. Much like the mythology of
and Confederate South which have been adapted to a variety of
tigation concerns the contested cultural memories of the antebellum
lated
memories that serve their market interests while also seeking to
equally consequential negotiations occur at the market system
role in the co-creation of identity value. We show that parallel and
between commercial mythmakers and consumers play an integral
socio-cultural landscape of American society.

We propose that important negotiations over identity value
occur at the market systems level whenever different cultural
producers, pursuing their own competitive and ideological agen-
das, differentially leverage a common mythic legacy. Even though
these cultural producers may not be directly competing in the same
product or service markets, in the media mélange of postmodernity,
they are invariably competing in a broader “myth market” (Holt
2004, p. 56-61) for identity value. As a case in point, the cultural
mythology of the American West has been widely appropriated in
various quarters of commercial culture in ways that are ideologi-
cally diversified and which have cumulatively affected the identity
value offered.

Our genealogical analysis explores the ways in which these
confluences of myth market competition, prevailing commercial
and ideological objectives, and historically contentious
contretemps structure the representational choices of cultural
producers—including those which seem more intuitive than calcu-
lated—as they seek to manage the ideological contradictions and
historical fissures that could undermine the identity value offered
by their commercial appropriations of myth. Our context of inves-
tigation concerns the contested cultural memories of the antebellum
and Confederate South which have been adapted to a variety of
commercial and ideological purposes. Much like the mythology of
the American West (Slotkin 1992), the South’s (mythologized)
heritage, and the enduring socio-economic patterns set by the
aftermath of Reconstruction, has generated prominent ideological
templates through which race relations in the United States have
been mapped and contested (Foner 1988; Lipsitz 2006; Roediger
1999) and which have fundamentally shaped the identity value
offered by commercial appropriations of Southern traditions and
Southern icons (i.e., the good ole boy, the redneck, the hillbilly, the
Southern belle, the Southern gentleman to name a few).

We provide a genealogical analysis of the transformative
intersection of historically contested racial countermemories and
the commercial and ideological agendas that shape the representa-
tional choices and strategic aims of two prominent New South
mythmakers. As editors of nationally distributed Southern lifestyle
magazines, our participants play an important and quite active role
in shaping their respective publications’ content. As we will show,
their mythic representations are structured by different ideological
aims, and sensitivities toward different countermemories, that
emanate from distinctive competitive positions. Through their
ideological strategies to manage these diversified, but equally,
problematic countermemories, these New South mythmakers are
also engaging in a market system negotiation over the identity value
of their proffered commercial myths, which is itself embedded in a
still broader cultural conversation over the South’s place in the
socio-cultural landscape of American society.

Prior consumer research has established that negotiations
between commercial mythmakers and consumers play an integral
role in the co-creation of identity value. We show that parallel and
equally consequential negotiations occur at the market system
level, as competing commercial mythmakers conjure collective
memories that serve their market interests while also seeking to
ideologically contain contradictory and destabilizing countermemories. We conclude by developing a model of the
transformative relations that arise between market systems, cultural
myths, countermemories, and competing commercial interests that
is compared to prior formulations of the meaning-transfer process
(cf., McCracken 1986; Murray 2002; Thompson and Haytko 1997).

“Jack Daniel’s America: Iconic Brands as Ideological
Parasites and Proselytizers”
Douglas B. Holt
Cocacolonization. Jihad vs. McWorld. The Lexus and the
Olive Tree. Brands are routinely accused of, or celebrated for,
playing a key ideological role in the advance of consumer society.
Given their prominence, it’s not hard to believe that brands play a
role. But what is it, exactly, that these brands do?

Dozens of scholars and critics have penned diatribes lambast-
ing the cultural power of brands (e.g., Lasn 2000), while apologists
have responded with odes that strenuously deny such accusations
(e.g., Twitchell 1999). This Manichean discussion rarely moves
beyond vague formulations: brands as global hegemons versus
brands as lifestyle props reflecting basic human desires. The
pertinent question cannot be whether or not brands influence
society—like any other well-resourced cultural actor, of course
they do. Rather we need to specify carefully what brands do in
society, and assess their (social, political, cultural) effects.

In this study, I present some key findings from a larger on-
going project examining the genealogy of Jack Daniel’s whiskey.
Jack Daniel’s Tennessee Whiskey has sustained an iconic position
in American culture for nearly fifty years. The brand succeeded
because it became a valued articulation of the gunfighter myth, an
immensely powerful myth in the postwar era. To explain Jack
Daniel’s success, then, we need to disentangle how a particular
whiskey brand came to be collectively understood as an icon for this
myth.

This study relies upon three kinds of data:

- Analysis of archival records of the company’s marketing
  activities and press clippings, at the Brown-Forman ar-
  chives and at their ad agency.
- Oral histories with a variety of managers, including the
  company’s first marketing manager who directed the brand’s
  breakthrough ad campaign in the Fifties.
- Interpretation of Jack Daniel’s representations in popular
culture from the Fifties to present, particularly in rock music
and in films.

I am interested in understanding the ideological impact of
brands that have the most powerful and durable cultural signifi-
cance, what I’ve termed iconic brands (Holt 2004). Since iconic
brands gain their power through the symbolic “work” that they
perform in society, studies of such brands must venture out into the
world and examine what it is that these brands do. For theory to
move forward, comparative and detailed analysis of the social
construction of brands is required, what I call a brand genealogy
(detailed in Holt 2004). My brand genealogy of the rise of Jack
Daniel’s Tennessee Whiskey provides a detailed explanation for
how iconic brands as ideological parasites

Brands become iconic when they are successfully articulated
to a thriving myth market. Iconic brands typically enjoin and
embellish existing myth markets, rather than contributing substan-
tially to their formation. Iconic brands play a supporting role to
other ideology-driving media, instantiating the myth in a distinctive
commodity so that the ideals can be ritually experienced in every-

Legoux 2005; Peñaloza 2000). Consumer culture theorists have
developed highly nuanced accounts of how consumers actively and
creatively use mythologized brands, products, and servicescapes as
resources for identity construction (see Arnould and Thompson
2005). However, this research stream has given relatively little
consideration to the ways in which commercial mythmakers seek to

ideologically enhance the identity value of their respective repre-
sentations and conversely, to insulate this symbolic equity from
cultural devaluation in the marketplace.
day life. Brands become iconic when they are woven into the most potent ideological currents in society. The power of Jack Daniel’s symbolism came from its articulation to the gunfighter myth. Likewise, in other genealogies I’ve conducted—see for instance studies of Harley-Davidson, Volkswagen, Budweiser, Snapple, Mountain Dew, Coke, and ESPN (Holt 2004)—it is clear that, to the extent these brands are successful, they are ensconced in the ideological turf wars of the day via expressive culture.

Iconic brands are mercenaries, following ideological demands wherever the action is. So we find iconic brands articulated to a diverse array of ideological positions: from the frontier myth of Harley and Jack Daniels to the Hobbesian sporting worlds of Nike and ESPN, to the aesthetic self-actualization of Apple and Volkswagen, to the sustainable development mythos of Patagonia and Ben & Jerry’s. While managers may be oblivious, we can observe analytically a process of cultural selection at work in which many hundreds of brands compete for the public’s affection, producing a profusion of creative experiments that inevitably lead some brands to stumble upon the major myth markets in play in a society in a given period.

Critics who contend that iconic brands manipulate culture mis-specify their influence. Iconic brands rarely rework significantly existing symbolism. Cultural products other than brands—including films, television programs, politicians, sports teams, and novels—do the ideological heavy lifting in modern culture, reconstructing myths to pioneer emerging ideals, creating what I term myth markets. Brand marketing laps up what these other media produce.

In fact, Jack Daniel’s emerged as an iconic symbol of the gunfighter despite the owners’ contrary marketing efforts, which attempted to turn the brand into an urbane professional’s drink. Their aspirations were subverted as the military, celebrity elites, and journalists all identified a much better cultural fit for the brand. Soon enough, the company’s ad agency adroitly picked up on this emerging symbolism and convinced management to launch a seminal print campaign that had a tremendous influence in solidifying the brand’s position as the champion of gunfighter values. This chronology is typical of what I’ve found in other cases: companies happen upon a way to ride the coattails of an existing myth, usually discovered by ad agency creatives. Large marketing companies are poor at seizing cultural opportunities due to the pervasive psychologization of brand strategy over the past forty years (Holt 2004, 2005).

In sum, iconic brands are ideological parasites. Brands succeed in becoming powerful cultural symbols when they tag along on emerging myth markets led by far more potent cultural forms (films, books, sports, politics and so forth). Why do people so value iconic brands then? I would argue that iconic brands play a useful complementary role because commodities materialize myths in a different manner, allowing people to interact around these otherwise ephemeral and experientially-distant myths in everyday life. Whereas an iconic film must be routinely re-watched (or re-imagined) to play a ritual function, myth-infused brands provide a distilled and less-involved means of experiencing the myth via consumption. And whereas iconic politicians or actors or athletes are mediated entities, far removed from everyday life, brands offer a more accessible form of iconicity that attends to people’s desires to directly experience valued myths.

So, while iconic brands play a key role in diffusing myth, they have little influence over the specific direction of these ideological revisions compared to other cultural actors. Brand critics have distorted the ideological role of brands simply because they have ignored the various non-marketing agents’ contributions in creating ideology-infused culture. [In the presentation, I will also develop the role of iconic brands as ideological proselytizers, which I have excluded from this abstract due to length restrictions.]

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Moderating Role of Valence Sequence in the Mixed Affective Appeals  
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ABSTRACT  
The present study determined how individuals with different cultural orientations process and respond to mixed emotional stimuli with different valence sequence. Overall the results confirmed the previous findings that suggest the existence of the effect of culture on mixed emotional responses. In addition to these findings, while for independent respondents valence sequence in the mixed emotional appeal made no difference on overall attitudes, interdependent respondents were more in favor of the “sad followed by happy” mixed appeal. They also reported higher felt discomfort towards the declining then the increasing mixed emotional appeal, but this attitudinal difference could not be explained by the level of discomfort they experienced. However, mediation analyses and Sobel test results provided support for the premise that feelings of discomfort mediate the relationship between culture, valence sequence and the attitudes. This mediation role was found only in the “positive followed by negative” mixed emotional appeal and for independent respondents.  

Moreover, interdependent individuals reported more favorable attitudes towards the “negative followed by positive” ad condition compared to the “positive followed by negative” ad condition. Interdependent respondents reported also higher feeling of discomfort when exposed to the “positive followed by negative” ad than the “negative followed by positive” ad condition. Mediation analysis, however, was unable to verify that this process is due to higher levels of feeling of discomfort experienced by interdependent respondents.  

INTRODUCTION  
Mixed emotions arise in a variety of situations. People report feeling both positive and negative emotions in several settings (e.g., wedding planning: Ottes, Lowrey, & Shrum, 1997, watching a movie: Larsen, McGraw, & Caccioppo, 2001; watching television commercials: Edell & Burke, 1987; seeing an ad: Williams & Aaker, 2002). Recent studies indicate that in many consumption experiences consumers feel mixed emotions (i.e. ambivalence), where pleasant and unpleasant emotions are elicited (e.g., viewing advertisements, Williams & Aaker, 2002; consumption of experiential goods, Lau-Gesk, 2005).  

Following the dialecticism perspective, which posits that Eastern type cultures seemingly accept contradictions as part of the life and Western type cultures tend to polarize contradictions, several researchers displayed that participants with a lower propensity to accept duality (in western type cultures) tend to respond less favorably to mixed emotional appeals because of increased levels of felt discomfort elicited (e.g., Williams & Aaker, 2002). In contrast, such appeals tend not to associate with higher levels of discomfort for consumers with a relatively higher propensity to accept duality (in eastern type cultures). Drawing on the findings of propensity to accept duality, the present study aims to demonstrate the effect of valence sequence on the effects of mixed emotional appeals. The possible effects of culture- valence sequence interactions on consumer attitudes are explored.  

The study relies on 2 Cultural Orientation (Independent vs. Interdependent self-construals) x 2 Order of Mixed Emotional Appeal (positive followed by negative appeal vs. negative followed by positive appeal) between subjects design. Culture is operationalized through individual level cultural construct, the self-construals (namely independent and interdependent self-construals). The use of self-construals provide a stronger test of the propositions since within-culture samples tend to be more homogenous relative to between-culture samples. Happiness is chosen as an example of positive affect whereas sadness is chosen as an example of negative affect.  

The current study advances our understanding of the effects of mixed emotions by examining the effects of culture on the responses to the mixed emotional appeals that incorporate conflicting emotions with different valence sequence. Overall the results confirmed the previous finding that suggest the existence of the effect of culture on mixed emotional responses where interdependent respondents report more favorable attitudes compared to the ones with independent self construal. In addition to these findings, mediation analyses and Sobel test results provided support for the premise that feelings of discomfort mediate the relationship between culture, valence sequence and the attitudes. This mediation role was found only in the “positive followed by negative” mixed emotional appeal and for independent respondents.  

Moreover, interdependent individuals reported more favorable attitudes towards the “negative followed by positive” ad condition compared to the “positive followed by negative” ad condition. Interdependent respondents reported also higher feeling of discomfort when exposed to the “positive followed by negative” ad than the “negative followed by positive” ad condition. Mediation analysis, however, was unable to verify that this process is due to higher levels of feeling of discomfort experienced by interdependent respondents.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND  
The study of mixed emotions has begun receiving increasing attention in psychology (Larsen, McGraw, & Caccioppo, 2001), and consumer behavior (Williams & Aaker, 2002; Aaker, Drolet, & Griffin, 2005) disciplines. The presence of mixture of emotions has been observed in a variety of settings, from watching television commercials, seeing an ad (Edell & Burke, 1987; Williams & Aaker, 2002) to once-in-a-life time events and special occasions such as break-ups, marriages, career changes, and even to making ordinary decisions.  

In general, theorists have been debating the relation between pleasant and unpleasant emotions within the last decades. The leading argument in consumer research continues on the degree to which positive and negative emotions are bipolar versus unidimensional. While one perspective is suggesting that the ability to experience conflicting emotions simultaneously is limited, since positive and negative emotions represent opposite dimensions on a bipolar scale; the other perspective supports the view that these dimensions are independent and that conflicting emotions can simultaneously be experienced (Williams & Aaker, 2002).  

The study of how affective experiences are combined requires examination of the integration of affective stimuli. To do so, previous studies have always investigated emotions of single valence. These studies agree on the important effects of recency (e.g., Fredrickson & Kahneman, 1993). Several other studies replicated these findings with both negative or both positive stimuli (Ariely & Camron, 2000; Baumgartner, Sujan, & Padgett, 1997). In their investigations, Grasshoff and Williams (2005) found that layering two negative affective stimuli that differ in their sense of responsibility and control (e.g. fear and regret) enhanced emotional intensity and compliance with the ad than a single emotional appeal. Nevertheless, for emotional stimuli consisting of both a positive and a negative affect is unclear.  

Only recently it has been concluded that order of emotionality matters, such that positive emotions experiences prior to negative emotions affect responses differently based on perceived appropriateness of the emotionality. Labroo and Ramanathan (2007) illustrated the importance of the order in which consumers encounter the different emotions in a mixed emotional appeal. They found out that under conditions of high relevance, ads are evaluated more favorably when positive affect precedes negative. They conclude
that the experience of positive emotion prior to negative emotion facilitates coping with negative emotion. However there is a reversal under conditions of low relevance. This effect occurs when the perception of a stimulus is more extreme than it would be if considered alone. Further, they have included a cultural analysis among participants who are better at dealing with duality with emotional duality. They found out that, order of emotionality matters such that positive emotions experienced prior to negative ones affect responses based on perceived appropriateness of the emotionality. An interestingly finding of their research was that participants from Western cultures were found to be proficient in dealing with duality like Eastern cultures. And for this group the order of emotions found to matter only when the used emotions are seen as less appropriate to the product category.

Besides this neglected part of mixed emotions research, individual differences in responses to mixed emotional experiences are indicated by growing body of research (Diener & Iran-Nejad, 1986). For example, older (vs. younger) individuals are found to have higher frequency of experiencing mixed emotions and that they are better in coping with these conflicting emotions (Labovitz-Vief, DeVoe, & Bulka, 1989; Williams & Aaker, 2002). On the other hand the psychological research, focusing on cognitive styles focused on the cultural differences, moved the individual differences debated into the cross-cultural research arena and introduced the term dialecticism. Peng and Nisbett (1999) defined dialectical thinking as “a cognitive tendency toward acceptance of contradiction” (p.742). Individuals from Eastern and Western cultures are found to fundamentally be rooted in different systems of thought and reason. Bagozzi et al., (1999) extended this psychological research on the dialecticism to the conceptions of emotion. They introduced a “dialectical” model which posits Eastern type cultures seemingly accept contradictions as part of the life, whereas, Western type cultures tend to polarize contradictions in everyday situations and perceive positive and negative as contradictions in a strong sense. Several other researchers had concluded with similar findings (e.g., Schimack, Oishi, & Diener, 2002; Scollon, Diener, Oishi, & Biswas-Diener, 2005; Kitayama, Markus, & Kurokawa, 2000). Williams & Aaker (2002), for example, displayed that consumers with a lower propensity to accept duality (in western type cultures) tend to respond less favorably to mixed emotional appeals because of increased levels of felt discomfort elicited. In contrast, such appeals tend not to associate with higher levels of discomfort for consumers with a relatively higher propensity to accept duality.

These findings are important in the sense that they shed light to our understanding of experience of mixed emotions across cultures. Considering the highly limited number of research on the moderating effect of valence sequence of the mixed emotions, this study aim to bridge together two areas of interest; the structure of mixed emotions and the cultural perspective on the effects of mixed emotions.

METHOD

The objective of the experiment is to determine how individuals with different cultural self orientations process and respond to emotional stimuli that incorporate two oppositely-valenced emotions with different valence sequence. Therefore the design of the study relies on 2 Cultural Orientation (Independent vs. Interdependent self-construals) x 2 Order of Mixed Emotional Appeal (positive preceding negative vs. negative preceding positive) between subjects design. Interaction between the independent variables is predicted. Culture is operationalized through individual level cultural construct, self-construals, namely independent and interdependent self-construals.

For the emotion types, happiness as an example of positive affect and sadness as an example of negative affect are chosen because they are found to similarly experienced, recognized, and expressed across different cultural contexts (Ekman & Friesen, 1986; Matsumoto, 1990). Further they are the two discrete emotions frequently used to form mixed emotions (eg., Williams & Aaker, 2002).

Stimuli Development. To develop the mixed emotional appeal, a pretest was conducted in which undergraduate students (n = 89; 62.9 % female, mean age = 21.03) were shown a set of two advertisements intended to evoke both happiness and sadness. Ads for fictitious insurance, and relocation companies were formed. Participants indicated the degree to which they experienced a set of emotions in response to each advertisement on a 7 point scale (1 = not at all; 7 = very strongly). Drawing on prior research (e.g., Edell & Burke, 1987; Holbrook & Batra, 1987; Izard, 1977; Richins, 1997; Williams & Aaker, 2002), nine items were included to create the sad index (sad, downhearted, discouraged, distressed, sorrowful, dejected, depressed, regretful, lonely), and four items were included to create a Happy index (happy, delighted, joyful, pleased).

30 filler emotions were also included.

The results of a one-way ANOVA on the Happy and Sad indices indicated that the ad of a relocation company with an appeal featuring a man standing backwards looking out of the window led to no significant differences in felt happiness and sadness (M = 5.01, M = 4.81; F = .954, p = .330), thus representing an emotional appeal that was a mixture of both emotions. No culture effects were found on sadness or happiness felt (F = .242, p = .624; F = .136, p = .71, respectively).

Using this stimulus as a base, a second mixed emotional appeal was created. Everything but the emotional-valence sequence of the mixed emotional appeal was kept constant. The mixed emotional stimulus created was presenting a negative emotional appeal followed by a positive one. A second mixed emotional appeal that presents a positive emotional stimuli followed by a negative one was further created. The ads were created to be as similar as possible, varying only in the valence sequence of the emotions that incorporate the mixed emotional appeal. A second pretest was conducted in which graduate and undergraduate students (n = 60; 56.7 % female, mean age = 22.6) were shown print advertisements containing either a negative followed by a positive mixed appeal or a positive followed by a negative mixed appeal.

After viewing one of the two ad conditions, participants indicated the degree to which they experienced certain emotions in response to each advertisement. The results of a one-way ANOVA on the Happy and Sad indices indicated that the advertisement with a mixed emotional stimuli containing a negative followed by a positive emotional appeal led to no significant differences in felt happiness (M = 4.88) and sadness (M = 4.90; F(1, 58) = .017, p > .05), thus representing an emotional appeal that was a mixture of both emotions. No culture effects were found on happiness or sadness (F(1,58)=.71, p>.05; F(1,58)=.277, p>.05).

The advertisement with a mixed emotional stimuli containing a positive followed by a negative emotional appeal led to no significant differences in felt happiness (M = 5.03) and sadness (M = 4.95; F(1, 58) = .158, p > .05), thus representing an emotional appeal that was a mixture of both emotions. No culture effects were found on happiness or sadness (F(1, 58) = .047, p > .05; F(1, 58) = .161, p > .05, respectively). Participants and Procedure. 152 (57.2% female, mean age = 21.36) undergraduate students participated in return for partial class credit. The experiments were run in small groups (n = 15-20) in a computer laboratory setting. Each participant was randomly assigned to one of the two ad condition of the study. The stimuli contained a full page color photograph of the
relocation company. Participants in the “happy preceding sad” appeal condition read, “a new home, a new neighborhood, a new beginning… I feel so happy about starting a new life; but I also feel sad about leaving all the memories behind”. Participants in the sad preceding happy appeal condition read, “I feel so sad about leaving all the memories behind.… but I also feel happy about starting a new life… a new home, a new neighborhood, a new beginning!”.

As key dependent variables, participants were asked to rate their attitudes toward the ad and attitudes towards the brand (1 = bad, dislike, negative, unfavorable, ineffective; 7 = good, like, positive, favorable, effective) and intention to buy the advertised product on a five-item scale. In addition, they completed measures including felt discomfort, ambivalence, verisimilitude, manipulation checks for emotion type, sequence of emotion valence, self-construal scale and demographic information. Participants were debriefed and thanked.

Manipulation checks. As a check on emotion type, participants rated the extent to which they felt specific emotions after being exposed to the appeal on a seven-point scale (1 = not at all, 7 = very strongly). 2 x 2 ANOVA on happy index and revealed no main effect of valence sequence ($F(1, 148) = .439, p > .05$) or culture ($F(1, 148) = .705, p > .05$). Further, no interaction effect of culture and valence sequence was found significant ($F(3, 148) = .01, p > .05$). ANOVA on sad index revealed no main effect of valence sequence $F(1, 148) = 1.76, p > .05$ or culture ($F(1, 148) = .524, p > .05$). Further, no interaction effect of culture and valence sequence was found significant ($F(3, 148) = 1.41, p > .05$).

The results of a one-way ANOVA on the happy and sad indices in response to the “sad followed by happy” ad condition indicated no significant differences in felt happiness ($M = 4.59$) and sadness ($M = 4.43$; $F(1, 150) = 1.20, p > .05$), thus representing an emotional appeal that is a mixture of both emotions. The results of a one-way ANOVA on the happy and sad indices indicated that the “happy followed by sad” appeal led to no significant differences in felt happiness ($M = 4.67$) and sadness ($M = 4.65$; $F(1, 150) = .013, p > .05$), thus representing an emotional appeal that was a mixture of both emotions.

Felt Discomfort. 2 x 2 ANOVA was run on the felt discomfort. Respondents with an independent self-construal reported higher felt discomfort ($M = 4.39$) than did respondents with an interdependent self-construal ($M = 4.06, F(1, 148) = 7.49, p < .01$). A main effect of valence sequence was found. Participants who are exposed to the “happy followed by sad” ad reported higher felt discomfort ($M = 4.36$) than did participants exposed to the “sad followed by happy” ad ($M = 4.08, F(1, 148) = 4.87, p < .05$).

Interaction effect of culture with valence sequence was not significant ($F(3, 148) = 1.78, p > .05$). On the other hand, planned comparisons revealed significant differences on felt discomfort reported by interdependent respondents among valence sequence conditions. Interdependent respondents reported higher feeling of discomfort when exposed to the “happy followed by sad” ($M = 4.28$) than “sad followed by happy” ($M = 3.88, F(1, 148) = 5.53, p < .05$) mixed emotional ad condition. Responses of Independent respondents on the felt discomfort index to the “happy followed by sad” and the “sad followed by happy” mixed ad conditions did not display significant differences ($M = 4.44, M = 4.34; F(1,148)=.45, p>.05$).

Attitudes. ANOVA was run on Aad ($a = .86$), Abrand ($a = .88$), and intention to buy ($a = .89$). Main effect of valence sequence was found to be significant ($F(1, 148) = 4.89, p < .05$). “Sad followed by happy” mixed emotional appeal generated more favorable attitudes toward the advertisement ($M = 4.08$) than the “happy followed by sad” ad condition ($M = 3.70$). Interaction effect of culture and valence sequence on attitudes towards the ad was not significant ($F(3, 148) = .26, p > .05$). Planned comparisons revealed a main effect of valence sequence on the attitudes towards the ad for interdependent respondents. “Sad followed by happy” appeal elicited more favorable attitudes towards the ad for interdependent respondents ($M = 4.31$) than the “happy followed by sad” ad condition ($M = 3.87, F(1,148)=4.64, p<.05$).

For respondents with an independent self construal, emotional valence sequence in the mixed emotional ad will make no difference on attitudes towards the ad ($F(1,148)=1.18, p>.05$). For the “sad followed by happy” ad condition interdependent respondents reported significantly more favorable attitudes towards the ad ($F(1,148)=6.47, p<.02$), while no such effect was significant in the “happy followed by sad” ad condition ($F(1,148)=1.81, p>.05$). Further, mediation analysis and Sobel test results revealed that this effect was not due to mediating role of felt discomfort experienced towards the declining mixed emotional appeal.

Confidence. 2 x 2 ANOVA was run on the confidence score ($a = .93$). There was a main effect of culture ($F(1, 148) = 4.38, p < .05$). Independent respondents in a mixed emotional ad condition will experience significantly less confidence in their decisions than will interdependent respondents. The interdependent respondents ($M = 4.11$) reported higher levels of confidence in the final purchase decision than did the independent respondents ($M = 3.71$).

A follow-up contrast yielded for both interdependent and independent respondents that valence sequence do not display any significant difference on the level of confidence in the final purchase decision ($F(1, 148) = .012, p > .05$; $F(1, 148) = .86, p > .05$; respectively).

**DISCUSSION**

The current study advances our understanding of the effects of mixed emotions by examining the effects of culture on the responses to the mixed emotional appeals that incorporate conflicting emotions with different valence sequence. Mixed emotions were manipulated as positive emotion followed by negative emotion and negative emotion followed by positive emotion. Overall the results confirm the previous finding that suggest the existence of the effect of culture on mixed emotional responses where interdependent respondents report more favorable attitudes compared to the ones with independent self construal. In addition to these findings, mediation analyses and Sobel test results provided support for the premise that feelings of discomfort mediate the relationship between culture, valence sequence and the attitudes. This mediation role was found only in the “positive followed by negative” mixed emotional appeal and for independent respondents.

Moreover, interdependent individuals reported more favorable attitudes towards the “negative followed by positive” ad condition compared to the “positive followed by negative” ad condition. Interdependent respondents reported also higher feeling of discomfort when exposed to the “positive followed by negative” ad than the “negative followed by positive” ad condition. Mediation analysis, however, was unable to verify that this process is due to higher levels of feeling of discomfort experienced by interdependent respondents. Previous research on mixed emotions has focused on the structural properties of mixed emotions (e.g., Green, Goldman, & Salovey, 1993), how mixed emotions may be assessed (e.g., Desmet, 2004; Thompson, Zanna, & Griffin, 1995), how mixed emotions are later recalled (Aaker, Drolet, & Griffin, 2005) and the consequences of feeling mixed emotions (e.g., Williams & Aaker, 2002). By examining the possible main and interaction effects of valence sequence in mixed emotions and cultural self concept, this study explores a still nascent part of the topic and adds to the growing body of mixed emotions research.
The results of the current study serve as a proof that cultural dialecticism may not always be taken as an indicator of propensity to accept duality. Certain other variables may well be an indicator of felt discomfort which in turn affects responses to mixed emotional appeals. Despite current research progress on the topic, our understanding of how mixed emotions influence consumer attitudes and behavior is far from complete. As the topic of “how emotions are used in persuasion appeals” becomes a major area of research in consumer research; effects of mixed emotional experiences should be investigated further.

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The Effect of Biculturalism on Responses to Mixed Emotional Experiences

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Mixed emotions arise in a variety of situations. People report feeling both happy and sad during important milestones (e.g., planning one’s wedding; Ottes, Lowrey, & Shrum, 1997) as well as everyday events (e.g., watching a movie; Larsen, McGraw, & Caccioppo, 2001). They also often experience oppositely valenced emotions when confronting issues close to their hearts such as those dealing with abortion and capital punishment (Newby-Clark, McGregor, & Zanna, 2002). Simply put, mixed emotions are part of everyday life (e.g., Diener, Larsen, Levine, & Emmons, 1985).

The ubiquity and complexity of mixed emotions continue to intrigue scholars from several disciplines. In psychology and related fields, the focus mostly has been on identifying conditions under which people tend to experience mixed emotions (e.g., Diener, Colvin, Pavot, & Allman, 1991), resolving the debate over whether happiness and sadness can truly be experienced simultaneously (e.g., Larsen et al., 2001). When they do, feelings of discomfort often arise as a result of such a mixed emotional experience (e.g., Priester & Petty, 1996). Research also shows that when both positive and negative emotion systems are activated and accessible, the resultant mixed emotions (Newby-Clark et al., 2002) motivate individuals to either avoid the uncomfortable experience altogether (Nowlis, Kahn, & Dhar, 2002) or find ways to rid the discomfort once it is felt (Ramanathan & Williams, in press). Moderators of the aforementioned relationships recently have been identified as well. Findings reveal that older (vs. younger) adults and people of an East-Asian (vs. Western) cultural orientation respond more favorably to mixed emotional appeals due to their heightened propensity to accept duality (Williams & Aaker, 2002).

The present research builds on the existing knowledge of differences in responses to mixed emotional experiences by focusing on how bicultural experiences could help develop coping resources for managing mixed emotions. Many people nowadays have been exposed to and are influenced by more than one culture (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). For example, Asian Americans have been shown to possess both interdependent and independent selves due to being extensively exposed to and influenced by Eastern and Western cultures (Yamada & Singelis, 1999). Importantly, for many minority biculturals in the United States, experience of mixed emotions is a major part of their everyday phenomenology (Hong, Wan, No, & Chiu, in press). As such, successful management of mixed emotional experiences is a hallmark of ethnic minorities’ competence in adjusting to the mainstream culture. However, as we will discuss, not all bicultural individuals have the same level of bicultural expertise, or expertise in managing their dual cultural identities. Such expertise develops as bicultural individuals become submerged in the culture and develop an integrated (vs. compartmentalized) bicultural identity. We propose that the successful experience of constructing an integrated bicultural identity could lead to the development of coping resources for managing mixed emotions.

If bicultural expertise contributes to effective coping of mixed emotions, in the absence of other coping resources, biculturals with higher levels of bicultural expertise would respond more favorably to mixed emotional experiences. However, when additional coping resources are available, biculturals with lower levels of bicultural expertise will benefit from these resources. Hence the effect of bicultural expertise on responses to mixed emotions would be attenuated. Interpretive frames for managing mixed emotional experiences, hereinafter referred to as coping frames, have been found to moderate receptiveness to mixed emotional experiences (Braun, 1999). These coping frames help to appease the discomfort felt among individuals who otherwise would react negatively to mixed emotional experiences.

Study 1 investigated attitudes toward an advertising appeal that elicited mixed emotions as a function of bicultural types (integrators or alternators) and availability of coping frames. Study 2 sought to replicate Study 1 results using acculturation exposure as a proxy for expertise in managing dual cultural identities and further examined the mediating role of felt discomfort in the relationship between acculturation history and responses to mixed emotional experiences. Finally, Study 3 provided a direct test of the hypothesized relationship of bicultural types and acculturation exposure (both as proxies for expertise in managing cultural duality) with responses to mixed emotional experiences.

Findings from the three studies indicate that biculturals with relatively greater acculturation exposure also tend to experience lower levels of conflictedness about their cultural duality. Moreover, both factors seem to contribute to expertise in managing cultural duality. More important, reactions to mixed emotional experiences differ according to how much expertise biculturals have in dealing with their cultural duality. In particular, mixed emotional experiences are associated with greater discomfort for individuals feeling more (vs. less) conflicted about their cultural duality and with more limited acculturation exposure. Further, biculturals high in cultural conflictedness and with limited acculturation exposure responded more favorably to a mixed emotional appeal than without a coping frame. We argue and show that positive coping frames help those with lower levels of expertise in managing cultural duality resolve the discomfort that arises when appeals elicit mixed emotions. The current research therefore adds to the coping literature by showing that positive message frames can be used to help individuals cope with and appreciate experiences they otherwise may seek to avoid (e.g., Fredrickson, 2001; Millar & Millar, 2000).
Extending Understanding of Consumer Ambivalence in Different Shopping Environments by Investigating Approach-Avoidance Conflicts
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction
Ambivalence involves mixed emotions. In general, consumers strive to manage the mixed emotions they experience. We conceptualize and investigate the multi-dimensional aspects of approach-avoidance conflicts in order to capture the complexity of consumer ambivalence.

Literature Review & Conceptualisation
Most studies of approach-avoidance have concentrated on consumers’ experiences within the retail environments, rather than examining the conflicts that shoppers experience in relation to the situation; the product or service; social influences; and psychological aspects. These all influence intentions to purchase from a store; generating emotional states such as arousal, pleasure, enjoyment and the desire to explore the retail environment. We conceptualize a possible linkage between ambivalence and conflicts that originate from approach and avoidance tendencies evoked by situational cues, product specific aspects, influences from the reference groups and the individual’s personality within two retail environments. Earlier research has shown that a certain level of arousal is indispensable to evoke emotions, such as pleasure, joy or happiness and their negative opposites, in contrast to Donovan and Rossiter (1982) who argued that arousal has positive effects only in pleasant environments while unpleasant stores might lead to negative emotions.

Methodology
To extend understanding of consumer ambivalence we investigate approach-avoidance conflicts by testing four hypotheses which link consumers’ intention to behave in a store to situation, product, reference groups, and psychological aspects respectively. The fifth hypothesis linked differences in the effects of the various influences (H1-H4) on two different retail formats (online and offline).

Scales were adapted from existing literature in developing an instrument that captured the possible sources of conflicts, and approach-avoidance emotional states and behaviours in conflicts. Using convenience sampling, participants were approached either in person or via e-mail. There were 335 usable questionnaires (Austria n=127, Greece n=111, U.K. n=117), 171 answers referred to traditional shopping contexts, 184 answers were for online shopping.

Major findings
In order to derive a manageable number of dimensions, factor and reliability analyses were conducted. Explained variance was above 50% for all scales and Cronbach’s alpha ranged from .60 to .92. The extracted dimensions were the basis for Regression Analysis (RA). The fit indices of the RA allowed the model to be accepted. Each source of conflict contributed to predicting the intention to shop in and/or recommend the store i.e. situation, product, reference group and psychological influences. The condition, online versus traditional offline shopping situation, did not seem to influence the intention to shop. There are, however, significant differences of the retail format in the effects of various influences, thus partly confirming our H5. The situation when shopping online is perceived as more complex. Product specific influences were found in the performance risk, which is perceived as lower in the traditional store. Both forms of product involvement were higher in the traditional store. Finally, regarding the approach-avoidance conflict, pleasure, arousal and dominance/control were higher in the traditional store, whereas the desire to return and explore the store was higher in the online store.

In order to find out how the emotional states pleasure, arousal, enjoyment related to each other and how they correlated with consumers’ willingness to return and explore the store, correlation analyses were run; separately for the two conditions (online versus offline). In the online condition, arousal (mean=2.58, SD=.72) was significantly correlated with pleasure (mean=2.37, SD=.72): the higher the arousal the higher pleasure (r=.31, p<.00). Furthermore, the higher the arousal the less consumers enjoyed the store (mean=3.04, SD=.90; r=-.16, p<.05), and the less likely consumers were to return and explore the online store (mean=3.80, SD=.96; r=-.22, p<.00). In the traditional store, arousal and pleasure (mean=2.69, SD=.74) were not correlated. The higher the pleasure however, the less enjoyment was perceived (mean=3.13, SD=.86; r=-.38, p<.00). Finally, enjoyment correlated with the willingness to return and explore the store significantly (mean=3.55, SD=95; r=.30, p<.00).

Discussion and Conclusion
Our findings confirmed the effect of mixed emotions on consumers’ experiences and move us some way towards a better understanding of consumer ambivalence. Earlier research on ambivalence indicated that attitudes are based on separate positive and negative components and had problematized the conceptualization of attitudes and emotions along a bipolar continuum. Petty, Wegener and Fabrigar (1997, p. 613) had argued that the assumption that “positive and negative evaluative reactions are reciprocally activated” is not necessarily tenable but rather “positive and negative responses should be viewed as a bivariate evaluative plane (Cacioppo & Berntson, 1994)”. Our findings supported this as well as Babin et al.’s argument (1998) “that positive and negative affects are often but not always unipolar rather than bipolar dimensions... one cannot, consequently consider negative affect as simply the opposite of positive affect” (Maxwell & Kover, 2003, p. 554). Our findings also support Cacioppo and Berntson’s (1994) view of “the inability of traditional bipolar attitude scales to fully differentiate among these possibilities [i.e. positive and negative responses] and ... that future research use separate measures of the positive and negative bases of attitudes” (Petty et al., 1997, p. 613).

Earlier qualitative work on approach-avoidance had identified, if not explicitly, disorientation and resolution within the context of consumer decision-making. This current study provides further evidence of the importance of understanding consumers’ disorientation, exploration and resolution (Harrist, 2006) when faced by the complex experience of mixed emotions in shopping channels. We would suggest the application of approach-avoidance theory to shopper behavior will potentially contribute to our under-

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1We would like to thank Christina Wastlbauer and Christina-Isidora Kyriksi who undertook the data collection for this study.
standing of consumer ambivalence, and thereby extend Smelser’s (1998) view that ambivalence can provide a “more nuanced understanding of the human condition” (Harrist, 2006, p. 85) to the arena of consumer decision-making.

References
TAM and Flow Theory for Investigating on User Communication Behavior in Computer Mediated Environments
Hsin Hsin Chang, National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan (R.O.C.)
I-Chen Wang, National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan (R.O.C.)

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Online interactivity is the key characteristic of the computer mediated environment (CME), this study try to provide a better understanding of the communication behavior in the CME. This research’s objective is to investigate the effects of interactivity level on Web user’s attitude and intention towards the usage of online communication tools. As the result, this paper tests constructs from system characteristic (Interactivity), extrinsic motivation (TAM), and intrinsic motivation (Flow Theory) in an integrated theoretical framework of online communication behavior. The results reveal that attitude and behavioral intention are directly/indirectly affected by interactivity, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness and flow experience.

Conceptual Development

Efficiency is a factor peculiar to Web users as the major irritations from Web sites with poor usability comprise wasted time and unnecessary traffic (Borges, Morales and Rodriguez, 1997). Interactivity features such as search engines, on-line dialogue facilities will reduce the time and effort in which users find what they want from the Web (Kling, 1994).

Hypothesis 1: Greater interactivity corresponds to greater perceived ease of use

Interactivity is found to bring about effective delivery of available information through engaging user’s attention, increasing user’s involvement, and enriching user’s experiences (Szuprowicz, 1996). Chen and Rada’s (1996) meta-analysis indicates that users of hypertext systems tend to have higher effectiveness than users of non-hypertext systems. Hypertext is an example of machine interactivity.

Hypothesis 2: Greater interactivity corresponds to greater perceived usefulness

Since improved performance defines perceived usefulness that is equivalent to usefulness, perceived ease of use would have a direct, positive effect on perceived usefulness. Extensive research over the past decade provides evidence of the significant effect of perceived ease of use on intention, either directly or indirectly through its effect on perceived usefulness (Wu and Chen, 2005; Yu, Ha, Choi and Rho, 2005).

H3: Greater perceived ease of use corresponds to greater perceived usefulness
H4: Greater perceived ease of use corresponds to greater attitude toward IT use

H5: Greater perceived usefulness corresponds to greater attitude toward IT use
H6: Greater perceived usefulness corresponds to greater behavioral intention

Attitude has long been identified as a cause of intention. Attitude toward using in the TAM model is defined as the mediating affective response between usefulness and ease of use and behavioral intention to use a target system. A prospective user’s overall attitude toward using a given system is an antecedent to intention to adopt (Wu and Chen, 2005; Yu, Ha, Choi and Rho, 2005).

H7: Greater attitude toward IT use corresponds to greater behavioral intention

Light and Wakeman (2001) considered that relationships between Web users and the Web may change when the level of interactivity changes. Moon and Kim(2001) considered IT which are difficult to use less likely to be considered enjoyable, and IT that are easier to use will be less threatening to individual.

H8: Greater interactivity corresponds to greater flow experience
H9: Greater perceived ease of use corresponds to greater flow experience

Flow experience is an example of intrinsic motive, whereas perceived usefulness is an example of an extrinsic motive. Flow experience seems to prolong Internet and Web site usage (Rettie, 2001). Webster, Trevino and Ryan (1993) also noted that flow experience was associated with positive subjective experience and exploratory behavior.

H10: Greater flow experience corresponds to greater attitude toward IT use
H11: Greater flow experience corresponds to greater behavioral intention

Method

Empirical data were collected by conducting a field survey of users experienced in online communication. The scale items for these variables were developed from many studies, which have been validated repeatedly. The scales were slightly modified to suit the contexts of blogs, BBS, and IM. The Internet survey was hosted by www.my3q.com telecommunication laboratories, and yielded 426 usable responses.

Results

Comparison of other fit indices with their corresponding recommended values provided evidence of a good fit (GFI=0.81, AGFI=0.76, CFI=0.97, NFI=0.96). Therefore, we could proceed to examine the path coefficient of the structural model.

Hypothesis 9 is not supported while the other hypotheses are all supported. Perceived ease of use (PEOU) in this research is just affected by interactivity (β=0.66), which explains 44% of the total variance on PEOU (R2=0.44). Interactivity (β=0.74) and PEOU

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(β=0.12) both significantly influence perceived usefulness (PU) and jointly explain 68% of the variance in PU (R²=0.68).

Attitude is jointly predicted by PEOU (β=0.24), PU (β=0.27) and flow experience (β=0.46) with 56% of the total variance explained (R²=0.56). In that, the effect of flow experience on attitude is greater than PEOU and PU. This implies an important fact for researchers that traditional TAM may not completely explain the attitude toward the acceptance of on-line communication tools. Finally, behavioral intention is influenced by PU (β=0.11), flow experience (β=0.19), and attitude toward using (β=0.68) and jointly explain 55% of the total variance in behavioral intention (R²=0.55).

**Conclusion**

In our study, perceived ease of use had almost as the same significant effect on individual’s attitude as perceived usefulness. Besides, flow experience had a more significant effect on individuals’ attitudes than perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. This means that the intrinsic motivational factors have more powerful effect than extrinsic factors to build positive attitudes. As the result, for academic researchers, this study contributes to a theoretical understanding of factors that promote not only task-oriented but also entertainment-oriented.

Concerning both the interactivity and flow experience, web designers should be cautious not to provide too much interactivity. The level should to be optimized for the constraints of users’ neural bandwidth and skills. If too much interactivity is provided than the users can take, it is unlikely to keep their attentions very long. Furthermore, the bandwidth of the infrastructure delivering the interactivity must be taken into consideration to ensure that the access speed is not hampered by the increased interactivity. In conclusion, designers should keep users in a flow state. IS practitioners must reflect intrinsic motivation as well as extrinsic motivation issues in user interface design.
Social Network Analysis and Consumption Dynamics: Research Review and Prospects
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ABSTRACT
Responding to Consumer Culture Theory’s call for increased research into consumption dynamics, this paper records recent advances in social network analysis. The elements of a longitudinal method for analyzing the co-evolution of group structure and behaviors is outlined and illustrated by the substantive issue of adolescent substance use as a worked example. This new method is compared and contrasted with existing consumer research in respect to group interactions / processes and social network analysis. The paper concludes by indicating the potential for new network methods—both qualitative and quantitative—in consumer research.

INTRODUCTION
David Mick’s ACR presidential address in 2005 was entitled “Meaning and Mattering Through Transformative Consumer Research.” (Mick 2006). The address was a call-to-arms to the consumer research community to address the pressing issues of our time, notably poverty and the environment. Complementing Mick’s call for a transformation in the content of consumer culture research, Arnould and Thompson (2005) called for an extension to the theoretical basis of consumer culture research. These contributions can be regarded as manifestos for re-directing consumer research in terms of theoretical, methodological and substantive issues. In response, the focus of this paper is on a new method for analyzing the co-emergence of structure and behavior in social networks. Far from being a mere technical analytic exercise, this method arises from the need for a better understanding of group dynamics, which is at the heart of much consumer research. We introduce the method via the substantive issue of adolescent substance abuse.

ADOLESCENT SUBSTANCE USE: RESEARCH ISSUES
Research on legal pharmaceuticals and illicit drugs is vast. A significant research stream is dedicated to the question: “What legal frameworks, policy recommendations, action programs and interventions will reduce the use of all ‘substances’ by adolescents?”

One driver of this current research stream stems from the recognition that mass social marketing campaigns have been only partially successful: adolescents still use tobacco and alcohol illicitly, and some also take illegal drugs. In dealing with substance use by this population segment, new strategies have been developed. These targeted strategies are often based on an understanding of the structure of adolescent peer relationships. For example, if there is a tendency amongst the most popular students to smoke, then successful anti-smoking interventions directed towards these students may halt the spread of the habit (Valente et al 2005). Such strategies are subject to scrutiny and further refinement.

The contextualized deployment of a range of proven substance abuse prevention strategies is the ultimate aim of this international research program. Consumer researchers clearly have an interest in the substantive issues (e.g. Pechmann & Knight 2002). However, from the perspective of consumer research as a disciplinary field, an additional consideration is the ontological refinements and methodological advances associated with this research program. For example, the ontological refinements permit a more disciplined approach to what constitutes a social relationship as distinct from a cultural one. Methodologically, research efforts have produced the means for analyzing the interaction between social structures and individual behaviors longitudinally. Reporting on these advances and relating them to consumer research is the main theme of this paper.

DYNAMIC NETWORKS AND BEHAVIOR
In respect of dynamics, the development of network research falls roughly into three time periods. Up until the mid-1990s, network research studies were mostly static, characterized by snapshots of inter-personal or inter-organizational relationships/relations. These studies tended to be structuralist in orientation, with behaviors understood as differentially determined by structural arrangements. Notable theoretical and empirical exceptions to this static structuralist approach include: diffusion studies (e.g. Rogers 1975); small world research (e.g. Milgram 1967); and the evolution of research collaboration (e.g. de Solla Price 1965).

Prompted especially by the growth of the Internet and the World Wide Web, the mid-1990s onwards witnessed the growth of research dedicated to tracking the structural changes of networks over time. Suffice to say that this research stream has featured a rainbow of disciplines including: physics, social psychology, mathematics, computer science, biology, and economics (see Newman et al 2006).

The third wave of these network research developments has scarcely begun. This latest wave is directed towards understanding the co-evolution of structure and behaviors in human networks. Corresponding to ‘structuration’ (Giddens 1984), this latest development takes up the challenge of modeling the recursive relation between structure and action. In human groups, the patterning of relationships (structure) impacts on the behaviors of individuals, whose actions in turn can modify the relationship structure. Analytically, this new development goes beyond a structuralist conceptualization of ‘network structure as independent variable and behavior as dependent variable’ towards a view of structure and action as being co-dependent; effectively, the quantitative counterpart of symbolic interactionism (Prus 1987, 1996).

Separating selection from influence
The paper by Steglich et al (2004) represents an early contribution to this third wave. Their interest is in understanding the social processes that eventually lead to ‘network autocorrelation’ – the phenomenon that in human groups over a period of time subgroups will form, identifiable by social or cultural characteristics, for example friendship or playing football, respectively. The substantive issue addressed by Steglich et al (2004) is whether network autocorrelation in adolescents’ smoking or drinking groups is the result of the processes of influence or selection. By ‘influence’ we mean: a person adopts the cultural behavior of a friend who is already aligned to a cultural sub-group, e.g. smokers or drinkers. By selection we mean: a person already has a cultural behavior and joins a sub-group who share that behavior.

The core of the matter is an attempt to understand the interactions between the social world as defined by relationships of friendship and the cultural world as defined by the (consumption) behaviors of smoking and drinking alcohol. Whether selection or influence is the dominant process connected to specific consumption behavior has been the subject of a contested research debate (see, for example, Kirke 2004). With reference to the policy stream
outlined above, determining whether selection or influence is the dominant process has obvious implications in terms of interventions.

The ontological and methodological interest of the paper can be described as follows. The Steglich et al paper builds on the SIENA (Simulated Investigation for Empirical Network Analysis) program, of which one use is the analysis of repeated data (longitudinal and dynamic) on complete social networks. ‘Complete’ means that all members of some population are connected by a universal relation, e.g. in a school, ‘all students in year 9’ defines a complete network.

Snijders (2006) offers this overview of SIENA:

“The basic approach used by SIENA for modeling network dynamics is an actor-oriented model, in which it is assumed that the social actors who are represented by the nodes in the network play a crucial role in changing their ties to other actors; in the case of associated behavior dynamics, also in changing their behavior.”

By using this model, collecting the relevant network and behavioral data, and performing the statistical analysis, it is possible to test for the underlying process driving the network-behavior dynamics. For example, in the case of adolescent smoking and drinking: Is selection or influence the dominant process?

As exemplified by Steglich et al (2004), the elements of the model are:

• Network members or actors—the nodes—characterized by behavioral attributes, such as (non-)smoking. In addition to these behavioral variables under direct investigation, data is gathered on actor-based exogenous co-variates such as gender and intelligence. That is, co-variates that are constant or relatively constant over the time period of the investigation.

• Directed relationships between pairs of network actors operationalized as dichotomous variables, e.g. friendship. Dyadic co-variates can be specified, e.g. students belonging to the same registration class.

• Typically, these network-behavior variable sets should be populated by at least three waves of data collection—network panel data. This contrasts with more traditional longitudinal studies in which data is collected at two time points.

• The co-evolution of network structure and behaviors is understood as arising from two types of actor decisions (independent in the paper under discussion). Network decisions are relational, that is, creating or breaking a tie with any other actor in the network. Starting or stopping smoking is an example of a behavioral decision.

• These decisions are modeled as being the results of myopic optimization by each actor of an objective function that includes a random term reflecting unexplained preferences and changes. This approach implies that the central model components will be the actors’ preferences and their behavior; the myopic nature of the optimization implies that the model represents the preferences that actors seem to have in the short term.” (Steglich et al 2004, pp. 4-5). The logic of this statement (justified by references) generates two types of decision dimensions: occurrence and decision rules.

◊ Occurrence is modeled by network and behavioral rate functions—respectively, these represent the differential opportunities that actors have to change their network ties and their behaviors.

◊ The decision rules require lengthy explanation. To be brief. With reference to the above quote, actors are modeled as myopic in having both relatively restricted global network information and the potential for action. In addition to these limitations, actors are posited as ‘calculating’—modeled as utility or gratification functions. Crudely, actors ‘choose’ from a menu of 19 network and 11 behavioral options so as to optimize satisfaction. As the authors write: “This endogenous part is the crucial element of the models proposed, and to our knowledge the only technique developed so far for data analysis of co-evolving dynamic networks and behaviour.” (Steglich et al 2004, p.10).

• After formalizing the above set up and classifying it as a continuous time Markov process, relevant data can be analyzed to test hypotheses about, say, the underlying processes of network-behavior co-evolution.

In summary, the model has both the conceptual power to represent the network dynamics of the interaction between structure and behavior and also the analytic tools capable of identifying the underlying processes determining those dynamics.

THE SOCIAL NETWORK TRADITION IN CONSUMER RESEARCH

One of the original drivers for the development of social network analysis was the recognition of the limitations of both under- and over- socialized conceptions of human group life. For example, in the neo-classical economic model individual actions are characterized by actor independence. At the other extreme, in rigorous forms of structuralism, behavior is determined by structure and the possibility of agency disappears. In contrast, Consumer Culture Theory (CCT):

“… refers to a family of theoretical perspectives that address the dynamic relationship between consumer actions, the marketplace, and cultural meanings.” (Arnould and Thompson 2005, p.868)

This ‘real world’ orientation of CCT is reflected not only by Steglich et al (2004) but also in the tradition of ‘small world’ research initiated by Milgram (1967). The empirical focus is on what people actually do in everyday situations—for instance, passing on a package to a contact. This orientation stands in marked contrast to laboratory experiments in social psychology and much consumer research.

Hence, in comparing and contrasting the contribution of Steglich et al to the body of consumer and related marketing research outputs the following selection criteria emerge:

- the substantive concern is with group structure and interactions in non-laboratory, i.e. real world situations (cf ethnmethodology);
- reference to social processes, e.g. influence, especially word-of-mouth;
- studies consider changes in social structure or behavior;
- studies are longitudinal;
- social network analysis is the main methodological approach.

The above record indicates the low incidence of network consumer research. However, classification issues were apparent in that, for instance, Ward & Reingen (1990) appears under 3 different headings. It is likely that JCR Subject List contains other relevant papers not listed under the network rubric. Post 2003, Cotte & Wood (2004) is a case in point as the authors use network theoretic terms, dyad and triad, although without employing social network analysis (SNA).

Critical reading of the JCR papers against the selection criteria resulted in a drastic reduction in the number of eligible papers. There were notable exclusions that on a superficial scan would have been included. Although rich in terms of networks dynamics, Frentzen and Nakamoto (1993) was rejected on account of its simulated nature. Frentzen and Davis (1990) uses sociometric (dyadic) data but was excluded because it does not investigate the dynamics of group interactions as a whole. Further, a large number of papers on reference groups were excluded because the research was conducted within very different paradigms from that under review.

For the remaining papers, the next search stage consisted in noting citation impacts and following through on JCR reference and other database (EBSCO) citations. This method produced the following sample of papers suitable for comparison and contrast with Steglich et al (2004). No claim is made for exhaustive representation. In addition to assessing the general prevalence of SNA in consumption research, the other main intention was to generate a set of exemplar papers focusing on the processual group dynamics of cultural behaviors and social structure. Brief reviews of the selected papers are now presented.

**Stafford (1966)**

The neglect of Stafford’s paper on “Effects of Group Influences on Consumer Brand Preference” is testimony of the general neglect of consumption dynamics research. Stafford pioneered some of the essential elements for investigating the interactions between group structure and behaviors in the sociometric tradition. Stafford investigated the variation in brand loyalty within 10 groups, with membership approximately 4 women, in respect of group cohesiveness and leadership–operationalized through ratings of friendship, communication and expertise. The study generated tentative conclusions. These are comparatively unimportant compared to the methodological interest. An additional point of interest is the reference to Markov techniques used by Steglich et al (2004). The reference is in part to Frank Harary, a major figure in the development of SNA in this period.


After Stafford’s pioneering effort, the literature search failed to identify any significant network consumer research until Peter Reingen’s considerable contributions over a period of just over ten years. Post-Reingen, there has been another fallow decade. It appears that apart from the work of Reingen, Dawn Iacobucci and Kent Grayson, network approaches to consumer research are few in number.

In keeping with SNA developments then current, Reingen et al (1984) provides a snapshot of the congruence between brand choices and social structure in a sorority in a South-Western University. Despite its static approach to structure and behavior, the study features concepts foundational to the analysis of dynamic networks. The authors rightly record their advances on, for example, Stafford (1966): “… previous studies have not systematically examined types of social relation and basic structure, and their methodologies have been found to be suspect …” (Reingen et al 1984, p.781). From its citation record, Reingen et al (1984) appears to have little impact on the use of SNA in consumer research. However, citing authors have taken up the relationship/relational theme that is at the centre of the network paradigm: culture and cognition (Roth and Moorman 1988); the Black extended Family Network (Cohen and Kaufman 1992); power (Mallialieu and Faure 1998); and consumer-consumer relationships (Grayson and Iacobucci 1999).

Brown and Reingen (1987) explored network word-of-mouth referral. This work is more dynamic than Reingen et al (1984) in so far as it considers stages in the referral process—necessarily requiring a time dimension. Thus, it is more akin to diffusion studies than the dynamic interplay of structure and behavior. Indeed, the transactional or transitory character of some referral links is central to the paper in the analysis of relative impacts on weak and strong ties. Further conceptual interest takes the form of the analysis of inter- clique information flows, of which a more general treatment is awaited in the consumer behavior literature. Whilst indicating that their paper addresses shortcomings in the understanding of diffusion phenomena at the micro and group levels, the authors call for “… future research with a focus on … applying tools characteristic of the “social world” rather than the “structural” tradition of network analysis.” (Brown and Reingen 1987, p.361).

Ward and Reingen (1990) provide insights into the impact of social structure on interaction patterns at group and sub-group levels and the consequences for individual beliefs. The dynamic orientation is clear, even though only two data points, separated by 10 days, are used. This paper represents a methodological development on previous work. It also extends knowledge on the correspondence between brand selection and socio-cognitive structure—particularly into providing a more finely grained analysis of intra- and inter-subgroup characteristics.

As indicated by this literature review, Reingen’s final contribution to consumer network research is represented in the set of three papers published in 1996. Moreover, after this date there appears to be no significant developments in research concerned with the dynamical interplay between social structure, culture and the actions of individuals.

Chandrashekaran et al (1996) is an extensive reworking of the data from the Ward and Reingen (1990) study. The authors supply a very clear articulation on the uni-directional conception of structure-determines-action dynamic. “We explore how the group’s social structure directs the flow of influence within and between cohesive subgroups residing within the larger group of decision-makers.”

In this brief review, it is not possible to do justice to the sophistication of Sirski, Ward and Reingen (1996). In using a mixed method—ethnography and social network analysis—the authors return to archetypal studies of the 1950s (e.g. Bott 1955). Their study also shares more characteristics with Steglich et al (2004) than the...
papers reviewed above. Notably, the authors state: “We propose a different perspective that treats neither the group nor the individual as the primary unit of analysis but rather examines how intracultural variation in causal reasoning about consumption behavior is explained by individual, social and cultural variables.” (Sirsi et al. 1996, p.346).

Ward and Reingen (1996) is a complementary paper, further developing the conceptual framework in terms of intermeshing networks, e.g. cognitive-cultural and social-cognitive networks. These papers mirror the state of knowledge then current both in the theoretical development of SNA and its applications. Given the potential of Sirsi et al (1996), it is puzzling to record that the paper has zero citations in the EBSCO database.


Dawn Iacobucci’s edited volume, Networks in Marketing (1996), can still lay claim to being the definitive work linking the respective disciplinary fields. Iacobucci has a distinctive place in this review as she holds an eminent position both in SNA and consumer research. Consumer research is well-represented in the edited edition. The paper by Bagozzi et al (1996) is structuralist in orientation. However, the authors suggest how knowledge of the socio-cultural patterning of re-cycling could be used to formulate a social marketing program–thus proposing a dynamic intervention, testable through further application of SNA.

The contributions to Networks in Marketing by Martin & Clark (1996) and Grayson (1996) are via the network relationship paradigm rather than SNA. Qualitative approaches to network relationships have been advocated (Lazega 1997) and Grayson has made further contributions in this respect (e.g. Grayson 1995; Deighton & Grayson & Iacobucci 1999). Perhaps the gradual dominance of the Relationship Management paradigm from the mid-1990s onwards accounts for the stagnation of SNA in consumer research. Somehow, relationships are understood as being ‘soft’ and SNA is perceived as being too positivistic. That such polarity—if it does indeed exist—is unnecessary features in one of Grayson’s papers: “Consumer influence is arguably most interesting when it is most protracted and subtle: when it is most seductive. This article has dealt with a class of influence phenomena that may require a time scale of the order of months or years to unfold, may demand a less psychological, more sociological lens with which to be observed, and would tax the ingenuity of an experimentalist to reconstruct in the laboratory.” (Deighton & Grayson 1995, p. 673).

The quote also emphasizes some of the key themes of this paper, the importance of time; sociological principles of structure; and real-world research settings. Networks in Marketing concludes with a paper, jointly written by Iacobucci, in which multi-levels of relational phenomena are discussed. In considering analyses at the actor, dyad, group and network level, Iacobucci and Zerrillo (1996) mirror the then current advances on the set of p* statistical techniques for identifying, probabilistically, the underlying social process leading to a known structural configuration (see, for example, Wasserman & Pattison 1996). The chapter also mentions that “Other dynamic phenomena are easily modeled …” (p. 401). Once again, an observer is left pondering as to the developments of these issues in consumer research.

SUMMARY FINDINGS & PROSPECTS

Table 1 shows the findings of the critical literature review of the selected papers evaluated against Steglich et al (2004). First, the table indicates the dearth of consumer network research. Second, coupled with the brief descriptions above, we suggest our analysis demonstrates that this new way of modeling the co-evolution of structure and behavior in groups offers a potentially powerful method for consumer researchers.

Steglich et al (2004) offer a challenge to the existing consumer literature on reference groups. However, the converse is also true. We briefly explore the possibility for mutual learning by examining the papers by Escalas & Bettman (2005), Rao & Steckel (1991) and the much cited Bearden & Etzel (1982). Because they do not investigate group dynamics, these papers did not fit the previous selection criteria. Yet, for current purposes, they provide a nice counterpoint since they span a period of over two decades and work with different conceptions of ‘group’.

This difference is important since in considering the relative strength of influence and selection in adolescent substance use, there is an underlying issue of group membership as compared with reference group affiliation. And here we see one of the limitations of the Steglich et al (2004) actor-based model, as being restricted in its levels of analysis: for example, inter-group interactions require recognition and then linking with p* analysis. Given that Rao & Steckel (1991) use utility functions in connection with individual and group preferences to study group polarization, the question arises as to whether or not this method can be meshed with Steglich et al (2004) to investigate both inter and intra group polarization and stability over time. Also, given that the endpoint of network autocorrelation for some adolescent substance users is hardcore drug use within tight-knit groups, interventions based on better understanding of group polarization and stability have potentially important applications.

Bearden & Etzel (1982) and Escalas & Bettmen (2005)–and, no doubt, many intervening papers–have the potential for adding to the knowledge framework of network consumer dynamics. For, although these papers are cross-sectional, they do generate a number of robust categories that could form the elements of dynamic processes. Both papers provide polar differentials that form the basis of decisions, e.g. private-public; luxury-necessity; and in-group-outgroup. Taking forward these concepts, nuanced within the papers, in dynamic socio-cultural settings promises to be an interesting and rewarding exercise for Transformative Consumer Research and CCT.

Finally, we return to consider both substantive and research issues. In respect of substance use, the term ‘subculture of consumption’ has validity. Steglich et al (2005) hint at the potential of their model to identify dynamic trends in subculture formation. But of course, within the consumer research literature there already exist exemplar works, most notably, Schouten & Mcalexander (1995). Informally checking this paper against the criteria of Table 1 establishes a good level of agreement—apart from the use of SNA. Given that although the econometric basis of Steglich et al (2004) provides us with a powerful analytic method, it also suffers from the general leanness of quantitative approaches, linking this paradigm with an ethnographic approach should prove particularly fruitful in understanding drug and other subcultures. Sounds rather like the point Peter Reingen reached in 1996!

REFERENCES


## TABLE 1
Structured Summary of Reviewed Papers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper</th>
<th>Selection criterion</th>
<th>Group interaction / non-laboratory setting</th>
<th>Social process</th>
<th>Change: Structure / behavior</th>
<th>Longitudinal: number of data collection waves</th>
<th>Use of SNA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stafford (1966)</td>
<td>10 informal groups / interaction within groups</td>
<td>Influence</td>
<td>change in brand preference</td>
<td>data gathered twice weekly over 8 weeks</td>
<td>measures: cohesiveness, group leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reingen et al (1984)</td>
<td>49 sorority members / non-interactive</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>in line with concepts and analytic techniques then current</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown &amp; Reingen (1987)</td>
<td>piano teachers: 3; students: 67; further students at 1-degree of separation: 118</td>
<td>word-of-mouth referral</td>
<td>growth of network structure over time</td>
<td>two-phase: 1.recruitment of current students 2.identification of referees</td>
<td>9 network related hypotheses tested, e.g. strong/weak ties in information seeking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward &amp; Reingen (1990)</td>
<td>37 subjects in a sorority / interaction</td>
<td>influence on choice</td>
<td>impact of structure on change in belief.</td>
<td>two waves of data collection, 10 day interval</td>
<td>SNA used to identify 4 subgroups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[also Chandra-shekaran et al (1996)]</td>
<td>comparison of two groups within a consumption domain / non-interactive</td>
<td>influence via expertise</td>
<td>structural comparison</td>
<td>quantitative component in two waves. (ethnographer reports over 900 field hours)</td>
<td>structural analysis revealing subgroups, dyads and isolates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sirs, Ward &amp; Reingen (1996)</td>
<td>74 recyclers 37 non-recyclers / no interaction</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Clique and node characteristics mapped against goal structures</td>
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<td>Bagozzi et al (1996)</td>
<td>129 pupils secondary school / interactive</td>
<td>influence &amp; selection</td>
<td>co-evolution structure &amp; behavior</td>
<td>panel data 3 waves / 2 years</td>
<td>SIENA</td>
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<td>Steglich et al (2004)</td>
<td>10 informal groups / interaction within groups</td>
<td>Influence</td>
<td>change in brand preference</td>
<td>data gathered twice weekly over 8 weeks</td>
<td>measures: cohesiveness, group leadership</td>
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Thirty-Year Cumulative Index: Subject Index (2004), Journal of Consumer Research, 31(June Supplement), S149-S183.


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

How do the seemingly unrelated elements of the primitive, technology and horror come together to produce new identities and conceptions of life in marketing communications? Are all advertisements, which produce a type of “anti-aesthetic”, unintentional mistakes on the part of the producer and repellent to the visual consumer, as dominant interpretations of advertising would suggest (Shimp et al. 2004)? This paper argues that marketing images can present the consumer with an ambivalent visual encounter, one in which the very notion of the aesthetic is thrown into question.

Some research in marketing has recognised the fascination and dread, the marvel and the horror that encounters with such images produce (Schroeder and Borgerston 2003; Toffoletti 2003; Goulding, Saren and Follet 2003). Many of these images incorporate a strange blend of the primitive, technology and horror, integrating themes of pre- and post-modernity, science and sorcery, progress and decline. This paper argues that such “strangeness” has led to the production of an aesthetic which combines the seemingly contradictory elements of the primitive, technology and horror to produce alternative paradigms of life—and new identities—in an age of technoculture.

The paper first considers the role of technology in disrupting “human” being and creating phenomena for which traditional discourses find it difficult to account. We are at a time in history when our acquired perceptions of the subject are being radically questioned, especially by new technologies (Braidotti 1994, Braidotti 2005). According to the feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti, we live in the times of the “postmodern Gothic” (2005:173) where the social imaginary of post-industrial societies produces teratological, monstrous formations—monstrous precisely because their technological character transgresses conventions of taxonomical description.

We then discuss the interrelations of the primitive, technology and horror. Technological progress is not a force that is unique to modern “civilised” society; it is intimately bound with art and antiquity—the primitive and the technological arise from the same logic (Heidegger 1977). Further, many subcultures of high technology incorporate primitive icons of shamanism, esotericism, the occult and mythology into their philosophies, exhibiting a strange aesthetic of “technological primitivism” (Davis 1999; Kozinets 2001). Horror is sometimes conceived of as a liberatory, avant-garde, or even postmodern genre because its function is to disturb cultural and ideological categories we may have taken for granted, leading, like technology and the primitive, to a sense of ambivalence (Carroll 1990; Halberstam 1995). Illustrative examples of images and figures in marketing communications that stage the primitive, technology and horror are then presented. Here, ambivalence and liminality become manifest. We argue that postmodern perspectives of biology may provide a useful way for thinking about existence in a technocultural era. Biology as the science of life and the study of living organisms has been extremely influential in an age of technoculture.

In the past few years, we have seen the potential to demonstrate that concepts such as “biology” and “anatomy” are not essential, a priori categories, but are themselves products of technoculture (Shaviro 1995:38). This leads to a paradigm of life where “no objects, spaces, or bodies are sacred in themselves; any component can be interfaced with any other if the proper standard, the proper code, can be constructed for processing signals in a common language” (Haraway 1991).

We use poststructural literary and film criticism to analyse in detail Audi’s 2005 advertisement Spider, relating its visual aesthetic to the film work of Ridley Scott and David Cronenberg. Drawing on the literary work on dirt, horror and abjection by Mary Douglas, Julia Kristeva and Judith Halberstam, as well as poststructural film analysis of the Alien trilogy (1979, 1986, 1997), we present how the technocultural imagination can be identified in the forms of horror it produces.

We contend that this advertisement combines elements of the primitive, technology and horror to introduce alternative ideas about identity. Metamorphing and primal technology emerge as important concepts in this advertisement. When something transgresses its boundaries, such as the ‘morphing’ spider-machine we see in this advertisement, it horrifies because it undermines conventional binary constructs and the natural humanist order. Both Donna Haraway (1997) and Rosi Braidotti (2005) have noticed how contemporary technologies have caused many systems, objects and bodies to exceed their boundaries—the “gene”, the “ecosystem”, the “database”, the “cellular automaton” or the “computer” seem uncatgegorisable, unbounded, difficult to capture, a symptom of the western era of high-technology. Further, in the Spider advertisement, the viewer is encouraged to contemplate a seemingly paradoxical scene of technology as a primal, instinctual force, something which seems to contradict and undermine its signified “progress through technology”. Primal technology implies that technology is not a sterile, inanimate instrument that the human has mastery over. Rather, the dirt and dampness of primal technology suggests an animate, breathing, life-force; a concept which works to disrupt our normal, humanist instrumental perspective of technology.

This paper highlights how concepts in science and technology are used in philosophy and literature, and drawn into visual texts such as film and advertising. We conclude that “darker” advertisements not only disrupt advertising convention, they inaugurate a new kind of ambivalent aesthetic, one deserving of further study. Sometimes in visual culture we are presented with concepts that disrupt the classic humanist view of technology associated with progress, the primitive with pre-technology, horror with fear. This can result in the production of entities which are “ontologically confusing” (Haraway 2000). Spider collapses the ancient into the high-tech, reflecting attempts in the cultural imagination to understand technology in a longer line of forces and fantasies in the cultural imaginary.

Reference

Audi Spider (December 2005) http://www.beam.tv/beamreels/ reed_player.php?reed=CbRD6WlrTIT&reedfile=SVGpFVCS6X&fs=1


The Carnal Feminine: Womanhood, Advertising and Consumption

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of the identification of women with carnality and nature in contemporary television advertisements, and the age-old social and cultural values that underpin this association. A selection of current UK television advertisements—for food, toiletry and cosmetic products—are discussed in relation to this conflation, under three key themes: the erotic, the carnivalesque and the pornographic. The paper concludes by speculating on why this identification remains ubiquitous in our culture, and whether this should be a matter of concern, from a feminist perspective, or whether it should be viewed as a harmless, ironic, postmodern trope in our culture.

INTRODUCTION

Advertisements are myth carriers in our culture, rich with symbolic and metaphorical content (Hirschman, 2000). They are also a mirror reflecting the beliefs and values of the wider socio-cultural milieu within which they are situated, reiterating and sustaining the norms and values of a culture. These values are conveyed through the language, imagery, rhetoric and symbolic signs used in advertising texts, and such texts communicate with us at a profound, emotional level, drawing on deep-rooted cultural meanings that are embedded in our collective cultural consciousness (McCracken, 1988; Thompson, 2004; Holt, 2004). This is a study of the identification of women with carnality in contemporary television advertisements addressing women, the socio-cultural values that underpin this association, and the wider implications of this age-old identification of womanhood with nature.

In order to unravel the complex strands of meanings and signs embedded in advertisements, we will discuss a selection of current television advertisements in the UK that, we argue, provide examples of three key aspects of this overarching conflation of womanhood and carnality. These we describe as the erotic, the carnivalesque and the pornographic. We will conclude by speculating on why the identification of womanhood and carnality remains ubiquitous in advertising texts in our culture, and whether this should be a matter of concern, from a feminist perspective, or whether it should be viewed as an ironic, postmodern, post-women’s liberation trope that no longer has oppressive power in our culture.

THE CARNAL FEMININE

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, carnal means ‘of the body or flesh; worldly’. Its secondary meaning is ‘worldly, sensual, sexual’. Carnal is from the Latin carnalis, from caro carnis meaning ‘flesh’. Traditionally women have been identified with the body and nature, and men have been identified with the mind and culture. Whilst the binary opposites of man/woman, mind/body, culture/nature, subject/object, and so on, have been challenged by postmodern thought, nevertheless these Cartesian opposites continue to provide a reference and indeed an underpinning for contemporary cultural texts such as advertisements.

The context in which we use the notion of carnality in this study is to discuss advertising narratives that depict women in a carnal light, namely advertisements that show women behaving in a sensual or sexual way, and that represent women as being controlled by their bodily desires. The notion of carnality is particularly interesting in the context of advertising, of course, in that it is commonly supposed that advertisers appeal to such wants and desires in order to entice us to consume their products or services. It is also widely accepted that increasingly marketers use experiential appeals to consumers’ emotions and senses, rather than factual appeals to consumers’ rational and practical sides.

From our perspective as consumer behavior researchers, there are two relevant aspects to the nexus of womanhood, advertising and carnality. One is postmodernism, and the other is feminism, and indeed the so-called return to the body in cultural and social studies has been attributed to both. Postmodernism and feminism, their contribution to our understanding of consumer culture and, specifically, advertising texts, and how concepts of womanhood are produced and perpetuated by them, is now discussed.

THE CARTESIAN LEGACY, POSTMODERNISM AND CONSUMER CULTURE

From time immemorial, the mind and body have been conceptualized as a man/woman split. Marina Warner, for example, writes about women’s ‘ancient associations’ with ‘carnality, instinct and passion’, in contrast to men, who are ‘endowed with reason, control and spirituality’ (in Schiebinger, 2000, p. 287). Camille Paglia (1992) also offers a full and eloquent account of women’s historical association with nature as distinct from culture. What we now refer to as the Cartesian split of mind and body, associated with the French philosopher Rene Descartes, is deeply rooted in a more distant past, and it is one of a number of binary opposites perpetuated and re-presented through time. This split is closely identified with a split between masculinity and femininity.

For the past decade or so, there has been an inter-disciplinary surge of interest in the body across the academy. This contrasts with a previous privileging of the mind in modernist thinking, and a concomitant privileging of the masculine over the feminine. The shift in emphasis from the mind to the body is usually attributed to postmodernism and the rise of consumer culture in the latter half of the twentieth century, whereby the Protestant work ethic gave way to a postmodern, secular emphasis on leisure, pleasure, and unrestrained consumption (see, for example, Featherstone, 1991; 1993).

The body has until comparatively recently been a neglected subject in our discipline. This is not entirely surprising, of course, given the privileging of (masculine) mental processes, cognition and rationality over the (feminine) sensory processes of instinct and emotionality. Indeed Joy and Venkatesh (1994) argue that consumption itself has been conceptualized and described as a disembodied phenomenon in traditional consumer research. They also observe that whilst in general terms the body, in all its complexity, has been largely ignored in consumer research, there has nevertheless been a preoccupation with colonizing and spectacularizing the female body. This is a perspective that is entirely consistent with a modernist discourse, they note, but it is one that is challenged in postmodern discourse, as the male body becomes increasingly commodified and scrutinized. The growing interest in the body in the consumer behaviour discipline is thus regarded as symptomatic of postmodernism’s celebratory and liberatory emphasis, which addresses the complexities and interconnectedness of the body and the mind in consumption (Joy and Venkatesh, 1994; Firat and Venkatesh, 1995). According to Joy and Venkatesh (1994), the binary opposites of man/woman, mind/body, culture/nature, sub-
ject/object, and so on, are being disbanded, and thus are no longer perceived as the embodied ‘other’.

Alongside the growing interest in the body in consumer behaviour research has been a broader definition of consumption, which embraces concepts such as consummation, thus firmly positioning consumer behavior in the experiential domain. This is largely associated with the work of Holbrook (1987, 1995). Holbrook argues that consumption is nothing less than the search for consummation, namely satisfaction and completeness. He writes that ‘our lives comprise one constant and continual (though not always successful) quest for consummation’ (1987, p. 131). Indeed Holbrook believes that ‘Consummations of one sort or another are what all humans and therefore all consumers seek.’ (1995, p. 88).

In so saying Holbrook underlines the notion of desire in consumer behavior, and this rich vein of research increasingly flows in the discipline, conflating human desire with product consumption, and emphasizing the tangible, bodily and sensory elements of consumers’ interactions with products and services in the marketplace.

Other scholars have also articulated the importance of desire in consumption. Gabriel and Lang (1995), for example, write that modern consumption unfolds in the realm of seduction, where goods are chosen not for their uses but rather act as objects of fantasy, and Bocock (1993) suggests that unconscious desires ‘are now articulated in the symbols of consumerism’ (p. 114), with consumption offering ‘the promise of satisfaction, not the “real thing”, which would be actual orgasmic satisfaction’ (p. 115). But, according to Bordo (1993), the challenge of consumer culture lies in the struggle to manage desire in a world that offers ‘a proliferation of desirable commodities’ and ample opportunities for excessive consumption (p. 195).

If human desire and consumption are both envisaged as a search for consumption, then it can be little wonder that so much advertising text refers to sexual desire and sexual consummation. Erotic imagery is used to suggest sexual consumption, as a means of enticing us to purchase and consume particular products. Whilst this is usually suggested in a humorous way in advertisements, it nevertheless underlines a significant cultural code, we argue, namely the gendered nature of this identification with carnal appetites. Indeed we will suggest that this identification is primarily prevalent in advertisements targeting women consumers.

Television advertisements offer an abundance of examples of erotic imagery, sexual innuendos and consumer consummations, but this is not matched with an abundance of research on the topic, and its implications in the wider context of consumer culture generally. According to Belk, Ger and Askegaard (1996) and Thompson and Holt (1997), consumer desires are seldom mentioned in the consumer behavior literature, despite the fact that they are all pervasive in contemporary culture, expressed through metaphors such as magic, religion, fire, romantic love, dreams, thirst, hunger, sex, and addiction. Belk et al (1996) argue that it is only when we view consumers as having desiring bodies and minds that we can better appreciate the important roles of myth, fantasy and the imagination in consumption. They write that the sexual metaphor in consumer desire is one that ‘suggests that the state of wanting itself is simultaneously exciting, pleasurable, and frustrating: an exquisite torture.’ (p. 370). In so saying they point to the bittersweet nature of this narrative. This ambivalence is particularly marked in food advertisements targeting women, we argue, as these narratives tune into this ambivalence, simultaneously enticing consumers to consume them and chastising consumers for their weakness in succumbing to the allure of such advertising appeals.

**FEMINISM, THE BODY AND CONSUMPTION**

The body became the focus of second wave feminism in the 1970s in terms of highlighting issues such as fertility and abortion. Theorists such as Susan Bordo (1993) argued that the neglect of the body was a product of the dualisms of Cartesian thought, which divided human experience into a bodily and spiritual realm. According to Bordo, womanhood became synonymous with the corporeal, as opposed to the spiritual. The feminine thus came to define nature, emotionality, irrationality and sensuality (Bordo, 1993; Davis, 1997). Womanhood had a dangerous, appetitive and volatile nature, in contrast to manhood, which was disciplined, rational and controlled, and unlike men, women were at the mercy of their mortal bodies, subject to the body’s frailties and vagaries, in both mysterious and unpredictable ways (Schiebinger, 2000). Womanhood was a force of nature that needed to be tamed and controlled by objective manhood, typically represented by the male scientist and his pathological female patient (Showalter, 1987).

By bringing the ‘unruly’ female body back into feminist studies, feminist scholarship shows how women’s bodies are experienced and symbolically represented in social and cultural practices. In cultural studies, women’s experiences with their bodies have largely been explored in terms of beauty practices, fashion, fitness regimes, eating disorders and cosmetic surgery (Davis, 1997). Much of this research shows how the female body is continually de-constructed and re-constructed, moulded and shaped, in order to try to achieve normalization in terms of physical appearance. According to Davis (1997), feminist perspectives on the body typically attend to three problematic: difference, domination, and subversion.

Difference, usually associated with Simone de Beauvoir and French feminists such as Helene Cixous, eschews biological determinism, whilst arguing that gender is socially constructed, but the sexed body is not. These critics point to women’s ‘difference and the materiality of feminine embodiment, which may be experienced as oppressive or empowering. Domination studies focus on how the female body is ‘symbolically deployed’ (Davis, 1997, p. 10) to justify and perpetuate power hierarchies based on gender difference. Much of this research focuses on how the female body is regulated and colonised by patriarchy, and it calls for collective forms of resistance and to women reclaiming their bodies and developing more ‘authentic’ and empowering relationships with their bodies. Susan Bordo’s analysis of the Cartesian legacy of mind over matter is probably one of the best known examples of this school of thought.

Finally, subversion focuses on women’s active and knowl-edgeable engagement with their bodies. Davis (1997) refers to one aspect of this as ‘biographical agency’, through acts such as cosmetic surgery, arguably a form of transgressive body politics. In keeping with postmodernism, this emphasis would focus on the symbolic spaces and alternative identities such subversive acts create, and is often regarded as (post)feminist research, typified by the work of Probyn, Butler and Grosz (Davis, 1997). The revalidation of the body and indeed the physicality of consumption is also a key element of postmodern feminist research (Shildrick, 1997).

Davis proposes that the three strands of difference, domination and subversion come together in what she terms embodied feminist theory. This takes account of the individual, material body in everyday life as well as the social and cultural theories that surround it in contemporary culture, and also addresses and explores the challenges and tensions that the body evokes.

If we pursue a postmodern feminist perspective, the use of carnal narratives in advertisements targeting women may be viewed as liberatory and indeed empowering ‘play’. Alternatively, we can...
We argue that advertisements often portray women as ‘consummate consumers’ who are ruled by their bodies and are less able than men to resist the lure of carnal pleasures (Belk, 1998; Belk and Costa 1998). The gender discourse of the marketplace, whereby men are identified with production and women are identified with consumption, is a given in the history of marketing and consumer behavior research. Furthermore, we argue that this manifests itself as an identification of women with carnality, usually in the form of experiential consumption and sensory pleasures. The narrative is particularly overt in the advertising of products (of which there are many) that are depicted as being endowed with the power to enable women to experience intense pleasure from their consumption. Examples of product categories that are depicted as objects of desire for women include dairy products such chocolate, ice-cream and cream cheese; luxury biscuits; and toiletries and cosmetics, such as shampoo, bath and shower products, and perfume.

The main carnal appetites that are attributed to women in advertising narratives are primarily those associated with sex and food. Often these two drives combine, so that food, toilet, and cosmetic products often draw on symbolic codes that suggest aspects of sexual love, such as seduction, sexual climax and auto-eroticism. The association of women’s consumption of food and toiletries with their sexual appetites provides advertisers with opportunities to explore a ‘naughty but nice’ discourse with considerable abandon. The discourse also has a dark side, however, in that there is always the implication that to give in to one’s powerful appetites may have unfortunate and undesirable outcomes. What happens when women’s bodily appetites become excessive?

Clear parallels are drawn in advertising between women’s appetites and women’s potential for excessive consumption, be it food or other pleasures of the flesh. Indeed Stratton (2003) argues that food products are generally embedded within a carnal (and often specifically erotic) narrative in advertisements targeting women because these narratives are based on the assumption that ‘eating is women’s secret pleasure, reminding women of the repressed pleasures of their own bodies’ (p. 237).

There can be little doubt that women often have a complex attitude to and relationship with food in Western culture. This is a culture that on the one hand encourages over-indulgence, and on the other hand chastises those whose lack of self-control leads to body shapes deemed unacceptable or aesthetically displeasing in this culture (Bordo, 1993, Wolf, 1991; Orbach, Urla & Swedlund, 2000). Feminist critique of consumer culture underlines the difficulties faced by women in consumer societies and the ideals that bombard them (Wolf, 1991). There are numerous examples in advertisements of the double entendres facilitated by this rich narrative of women’s underlying yet ultimately overwhelming carnal natures, thus creating a market for luxurious food products that offer indulgence without the penalty. This usually translates as ones that don’t have high calories attached, such as the low-calorie range of chocolate biscuits called ‘Go Ahead’.

In their study of women’s chocolate consumption, Belk and Costa (1998) acknowledge that consumption of luxury foods is gendered as female. They also refer to the ‘emotionally charged’ environment within which women consume chocolate (p. 189), and ambivalence is acknowledged as an integral part of women’s consumption of such products. Indeed Lupton (1996) writes that chocolate signifies ‘romance, luxury, decadence, indulgence, reward, sensuousness and femininity’ (p. 35). Advertisements for chocolate address this ambivalence in their seductive and often tongue-in-cheek narratives of women succumbing to the temptation of eating pleasurable, high caloric, often luxury food products. Historically, chocolate’s association with love and its aphrodisiacal properties has been well-documented (Lupton, 1996). We are now told that chocolate is a particularly seductive product because of the ‘love molecule’, phenylethylamine, it contains, which supposedly means that chocolate has the ability to stimulate the euphoria and quickening of the pulse associated with being in love, an association which is highly visible in most chocolate advertisements targeting women. Chocolate is memorably envisaged as holding the key to ‘happiness’in the recent Cadbury’s chocolate campaign, in which an assortment of bizarre animal ‘pets’ materialize, and encourage their female owners to give into their ‘happiness’, namely eat some Cadbury’s chocolate. Lupton (1996), citing Barthel (1989), notes that culturally, such melting moments signify the dissolve of sexual surrender.

To summarise, in the world of contemporary advertising women are portrayed (and targeted by advertisers) as being ‘essentially’ ruled by their carnal natures. The ‘naughty but nice’ narrative that pervades advertisements addressing women is one that is rooted in long-standing, traditional models of femininity, through its association with women’s bodily transgressions and weaknesses, and above all women’s susceptibility to temptation and sin. It is therefore a narrative that needs to be understood within the context of a dominant one that equates women with nature and the body, in binary opposition to men’s equation with culture and the mind (Paglia, 1992). Indeed contemporary advertising appeals resonate with us because there is a socio-cultural recognition that such animal wants are powerful in women and therefore they must be expected as well as controlled, indulged in as well as ridiculed, stimulated as well as policed. As consumers women are thus tempted by a never-ending array of erotically and emotionally charged advertising narratives, narratives that also point to the bittersweet ambivalence that lies at the core of such appeals and such consumer desires. Women’s apparently insatiable desire for ‘naughty but nice’ products must be catered for, after all women have neither the will nor, if advertisers are to be believed, the biological makeup to resist them!

THE METHOD

Eileen Fischer in her Advances in Consumer Research paper of 2000 summarises the main postmodern approaches to analysing texts. One of these is ‘historical and genealogical approaches to discerning the symbolic webs of meaning in which advertising texts are embedded and the bricolage of sign fragments on which they draw.’ (p. 289). This is largely the approach we have taken in our paper. Over the past three or four years we have watched and discussed numerous advertisements targeting women. In doing so we have been struck by the centrality of the theme of carnality in the many advertisements targeting women, especially those for food, toiletries, and cosmetics. We thus began to explore the historical and genealogical context of women’s conflation with carnality and nature. This enabled us to better comprehend the complex webs of signs and meanings embedded within the ads. This iterative process led us to identify three key themes, namely the erotic, the carnivalesque and the pornographic, and these form the basis of the discursive analysis that follows. We should stress that we are not attempting to predict consumer responses to these ads, nor do we claim to understand the intentions of the creators of these ads. We merely mean to show how the conflation of womanhood with
carnality manifests itself in advertising narratives targeting women, and in so doing we hope to highlight and better understand some of the implications of this ubiquitous narrative in our culture.

THE EROTIC

The erotic refers to ‘sexual love’, and to stimuli that cause sexual love, especially tending to arouse sexual desire or excitement. Perhaps the best known advertisement that exactly expresses this narrative is the Herbal Essences shampoo campaign by Clairol, which displays a woman washing her hair in a shower. The climax (in more ways than one) of the ad has the woman saying ‘Yes! Yes! Yes!’ in an excited tone of voice, mirroring the infamous Meg Ryan moment in the film When Harry Met Sally, when Sally mimics having an orgasm in a coffee shop, much to the embarrassment of Harry! The Herbal Essences advertisement ends with the strap-line ‘A totally organic experience’, thereby underlining the sexual narrative at its core and its ‘naturalness’.

A significant aspect of the erotic narrative in advertising to women is those ads that make parallels between women’s sexual seductiveness and their consumption of food. Such ads use an erotic narrative that assumes both a female and a male gaze and implies male sexual pleasure, a la Freud, from observing woman’s consumption of food products. Indeed Bordo (1993) argues that female appetite and female sexuality are conflated in our culture. A TV ad for Wall’s Cornetto range of luxury ice-creams features an attractive young woman on a balcony slowly consuming her ice cream with a spoon whilst watching a handsome artist at work in the room opposite. He is aware that he is being watched, and with each mouthful that she takes the artist becomes increasingly distracted from his work and aroused by her, indicated by some auto-erotic body stroking on his part and an increase in perspiration! Finally he can’t bear it any longer and he rushes from the room, presumably in the direction of her apartment, judging by her knowing smile towards the door at the end of the ad. This association is most overt in the advertising of chocolate and luxury ice-cream bars (the Cadbury’s Flake ad and Wall’s Magnum campaign providing two excellent exemplars) when the Freudian symbolism inherent in the consumption of such products is used to full effect. Bordo (1993) writes that in our culture the act of a woman eating is equated with her sexually devouring a man (p. 117), and certainly this code is used to full and suggestive effect in advertising texts.

Many ad campaigns focus on women’s tendency to become animalistic and instinctive when served up the right product. Wall’s have just launched a humorous TV ad campaign for a new range of luxury ice-creams in their Cornetto range called ‘Love Potion’. The strapline is ‘Love at first bite—steer clear of them’, and the ad shows the wild, uncontrollable passions that can be unleashed in women by their consumption. In a similar vein, Cussons Imperial Leather have a TV ad campaign for their range of luxury bath foams, which features a woman in a bath who conjures up a handsome footballer in her bathroom, and the voiceover says ‘Where will Imperial Leather take you? Release the lover.’ In another ad in the series the woman calls on the services of a number of handsome firemen to extricate her big toe from the tap, and is delighted by their attentions. Animals may also be used to signify women’s lustful and even predatory natures. An advertisement for Lynx toiletry products for men shows bikini-clad and wild looking women (reminiscent of Raquel Welch in the classic ‘B’ movie) descending, in their droves, on a man on a beach who has just sprayed himself with some Lynx body spray. In Christian Dior’s advertisement for Pure Poison, a dark, predatory temptress is transformed into a black panther by the perfume.

The idea that women get more erotic pleasure from food than from men is a narrative that is frequently expressed, most notably in chocolate advertisements such as Galaxy and Maltezers, and in other food categories such as Philadelphia Cream Cheese and the Mullerlite campaign for low fat yoghurts, in which a man is thwarted in his desire for a woman by her greater desire for Mullerlite yoghurt.

HB’s Magnum range of luxury ice creams called ‘7 Deadly Sins’, shows a woman who is tempted by Magnum (the devil) who introduces her to her ‘sinful selves’ and she then embarks on her ‘journey’ … ‘so many sins, so little time.’ The television advertising campaign features an ad for each of the seven options available in the range and features the same woman in TV ads representing each of the seven sins: revenge, gluttony, sloth, greed, jealousy, vanity and lust. In a new campaign GHD hair straighteners (‘the gospel according to GHD’) also use the seven sins, to show the immoral lengths a woman will go to, to acquire the object of her desire. Women’s identification with sin and temptation is also made reference to in an ad for the new DKNY perfume for women, ‘a new temptation in women’s fragrance’. Be Delicious and Red Delicious extol women to ‘be delicious–take another bite’, recalling Eve’s inability to resist temptation.

THE CARNIVALESQUE

Bakhtin’s theory of the carnivalesque and the grotesque body has been embraced by feminist theorists. The carnivalesque creates a liberatory play space within which societal norms are subverted and anarchic reigns, albeit briefly, but long enough for the seeds of new ideas to be planted, and for a sense of community to override individual differences and strictures. In terms of TV advertisements, the carnivalesque is present in those advertisements that show women happily succumbing to their animal appetites. The best example of this theme is the Terry’s Chocolate Orange campaign. This campaign memorably casts the generously proportioned English comedienne and actress Dawn French as the insatiable chocoholic who can’t control her consumption of Terry’s Chocolate Orange and nor does she want to. Above all, she wants to keep this pleasure to herself and has no desire to share her Chocolate Orange: ‘It’s not Terry’s! It’s mine’. We are also led to assume that she is supremely indifferent to the bodily consequences of such indulgence, and indeed Dawn French takes a celebratory approach to being a larger woman generally, not least by developing a range of clothing for women with larger than average body shapes. Such an approach plays on but also challenges the acknowledged difficulties experienced by American women in particular, in relation to body fat, according to Counihan (1999).

The humour in the Terry’s Chocolate Orange campaign reflects Dawn French’s own flamboyant, comedic style, but not all advertisements featuring larger women are as playful and sympathetic as this. Often women of ample proportions are used for comic effect in advertising, as they are frequently depicted as being ridiculous and undesirable when they become too obese. A Miller’s beer ad shows a chubby woman discarding her bikini top on a beach on the Costa del Sol, watched in horror by two young, handsome Spanish men. This scene is then contrasted with two attractive young women wearing bikini tops on a beach in the USA. In another recent example for a car advertisement, the scene is a wife swapping party. A larger than average sized woman delves into a bowl of keys and all the men are shown to shift about uncomfortably, avoiding eye-contact with her, until they note which car keys she is holding, then they are all clamour to be chosen by her, in the hope that sleeping with her will give them access to her car. A similar narrative is also used in a current ad for Alpen muesli breakfast
cereal, in which a man misunderstands an overhead conversation between his plump and homely wife and her slimmer, more glamorous and groomed friend, and gleefully assuming that some ‘swinging’ is on the cards he makes it clear that he welcomes this prospect, much to his wife’s dismay and disgust. The ad ends with his disgruntled wife seeking solace in a bowl of Alpen cereal whilst cold-shouldering her hapless, would-be-errant husband.

Older women may also find themselves the butt of sexual jokes in advertising campaigns. In one Herbal Essences TV advertisement, for example, an old lady in hair curlers is sitting up in bed with her husband. He is reading, but she is distracted by the orgasmic sounds emanating from the room next door, and we are shown a young woman in a shower washing her hair with Herbal Essences shampoo. The old woman, on hearing the young woman say ‘Yes! Yes! Yes!’ mutters that she’d be happy with just the one, clearly underlining her sexual appetites and her sexual frustration, as it would appear her husband prefers a good book to having sex with his wife. This female stereotype reminds one of the ancient, ribald and sexually insatiable Wife of Bath in Chaucer’s The Canterbury Tales.

**THE PORNOGRAPHIC**

The identification of food consumption with sexual intercourse is well-documented in all cultures (see Counihan, 1999, for a discussion of this). In advertising, this identification may be expressed in its extreme form via the use of pornographic codes. The pornographic often denotes prostitution and sex for sale, and is rooted in the concept of domination over women, often through violence. It assumes male superiority and female objectivity and mistreatment (Stern, 1991). It also commodifies the human body and persistently stereotypes male and female sexual roles (Schroeder & McDonagh, 2004). The pornographic is increasingly drawn on to explore aspects of food consumption and different modes of sensuality. Indeed Probyn (2000) discusses the ‘soft porn’ antics of celebrity TV cooks, and quotes Nigella Lawson’s view that ‘we are all now gastropornographers’. Lawson goes on to observe: ‘it makes perfect sense that in a “puritanical” age “the last allowable excess should be gastronorn”’ (Lawson, 1999, pp. 153-154). The Kinder Bueno range of chocolate bars is an excellent exemplar of the pornographic, and freely uses ‘porn codes’. This campaign memorably and disturbingly uses these codes to personify the product as a female prostitute (the product range previously targeted young children). It features a male customer, complete with dirty mac, furtively entering a newsagents’ shop and casting his eye up to the top shelf of the magazine racks. His attention is arrested, however, by the voice of a young, high-pitched Far-Eastern accented female voice urging him to ‘bite me bite me, I’ll be whatever you want me to be’, a voice that emanates from a gyrating chocolate bar. Clearly the ad draws on sado-masochistic porn codes to make the product memorable and appealing to its new target market, adult males.

In a similar vein, an ad for Pot Noodles shows a man rejecting his wholesome wife’s offer of a home-made sandwich so that he can search for ‘something dirty’ in the local red light district. Having been slapped by a number of indignant ladies of the night by his whispered requests, he eventually finds a ‘tart with a heart’ who takes him into a dark alley, and there he finds what he’s been looking for, a Pot Noodle. More recently, a horse-riding and hunting analogy is used in this series, with references made to an upper class lady (with more than a passing resemblance to Lady Chatterley) and her lusty gamekeeper. The campaign currently uses a riding horn (‘have you got the horn?’) to suggest the product’s association with sexual arousal and the sex act itself.

**DISCUSSION**

Both these examples gender such food products as feminine, and interestingly, both these examples identify men’s consumption of bad products with their consumption of bad women, a device that one might argue is another aspect of the perception of woman as insatiable consumer luring men from the straight and narrow path, but in this case she is also the product itself, a commodity that men can’t resist, and that is insatiably consumed, and, even worse, a product that is bad for men’s health! In other advertisements, a woman eating a product is laden with sexual suggestiveness and indeed sexual service, as in the following example, a phone sex service. A current ad for Muller Corners luxury yoghurts features a woman slowly taking a spoonful of yoghurt for the benefit of her partner who is clearly on a business trip to the Far East, as he is flanked on either side by two Asian businessmen. All three men eagerly watch the woman on his mobile phone as she says ‘Am I doing it right?’ Such advertisements draw clear parallels between a woman eating and a woman servicing a man’s sexual needs, through the judicious use of porn codes.

This paper argues that the world of advertising provides an ideal opportunity to explore the age-old relationship between womanhood and carnality, a relationship that has been culturally reinscribed for contemporary consumption. Hopefully we have demonstrated how the ubiquitous and ancient narrative of woman as carnal ‘consmomate consumer’ is as powerful and pervasive a myth as it ever was. This pre-modern myth has endured into our postmodern age, and perhaps this is not surprising. Fischer (2000) writes that premodernist, modernist and postmodernist texts, signs and signifiers co-exist in a multi-vocal world (p. 6). She also observes that this multi-vocality ensures that reconciliations and contradictions are the order of the day, with ‘liberatory’ postmodern discourses going hand in hand with ‘constraining’ modernist ones (p. 6). We would concur with her view, and conclude that this very much describes the TV advertisements we have discussed in this paper. We believe that the association of womanhood with carnality is one that we should problematise, as in so doing we acknowledge the complexities inherent in this narrative. In these so-called post-feminist, postmodern times, we are perhaps expected to join with the advertisers and laugh at ourselves, affirming our hopeless dependency on our bodily appetites, our sensual desires for luxurious shower and bath products, and our passionate addictions to all things that are bad for us, be it chocolate or other pleasures of the flesh (such as shower gel!) It is clear, however, that we could view this identification of women with uncontrollable appetites as, at the very least, a self-fulfilling prophecy and, at the worst, as a stereotypical construct that ensures women’s continued identification with the body, and their denigration because of this. On a more serious note, we might perhaps point to the work of Susie Orbach and Susan Bordo, and acknowledge that the revalidation of the body, and a focus on women’s subjectivity, is not necessarily experienced as a liberatory and playful phenomenon by women consumers. We might also mention one of many recent studies that have been conducted into women’s ‘self-images’ (Good Housekeeping, May 2007), which revealed that 84% of the 1000 UK women interviewed for the survey felt that they were under pressure to look attractive, 79% admitted that their mood affected their food choice, and 52% couldn’t socialize with others when they felt unattractive.

On a more optimistic note, we close by making mention of Dove’s controversial ‘Campaign for Real Beauty’. This highly publicized campaign famously uses ordinary women of all ages, body sizes and skin colours, to send out a message that beauty is too
narrowly defined in our culture. By affirming female subjectivity, the campaign recalls the positive benefits of ‘jouissance’ (joyful loving of oneself) associated with French feminist thought (Irigaray, 1985, 1993), and it also celebrates the carnivalesque, in its challenging of the notion of the grotesque female body and its affirmation of the female body in all its diversity of shapes, sizes, colours and life-cycle stages. At the very least, the Dove’s advertising campaign recognizes that women are not just bodily objects but bodily subjects (real women) and in so doing, the campaign presents a more positive and complex view of female embodiment in postmodern advertising texts, one that emphasises carnal celebration rather than cerebral constraint, whilst not denying the complexities inherent in this dialectic. Above all, perhaps, advertising texts underline the plurality and multi-vocality of postmodern discourse, serving up a melange of pre-modern, modern and postmodern discourses to appeal to our increasingly complex palates.

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Dessert: Heavenly or Sinful?  
Consumption, Carnality and Spirituality in Food Advertising  
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ABSTRACT
Food as a commodity does not solely represent nourishment; it conveys cultural and social values that are consumed by the self and transferred to denote the self. This paper examines the dimensions of a particular type of food and its complex representational associations with sexuality and femininity, first by considering the historical lineage of its cultural importance and then by conducting a content analysis of its representation in modern advertising. Understanding the fascination in connections between food and sex provides a creative and potentially informative way of exploring, experiencing and developing our humanity.

INTRODUCTION
All people share an intimate connection with food as a physical necessity: "Food is a metonym of the mortality of human flesh, the inevitable entropy of living matter" (Lupton 1996, 3). As such, it is a source of great ambivalence, necessary for survival, part of human enjoyment and connection, but also a source of threat, of contamination, of prejudice (Hirschman et al. 2004; Luomala, Laaksonen, and Leipämäa 2004) with frequently strong gendered connotations (Belk and Costa 1998; Fischer 2000). The experience of food around the world, in various cultures, countries, regions, families, and even as it is experienced on an individual level, is extraordinary in its ability to denote diversity and promote unity. In postmodern analysis of advertisements, food has been called “the product category that is at once the most mundane and the most sublime” (Fischer 2000, 288). This paper explores ways in which food is depicted in advertising as a vehicle of socialization and individual gratification. Specifically, this paper considers the role of dessert as an analogy for sexual indulgence, as depicted in American advertising, and its effect on concepts of femininity and womanhood, first by exploring previous research and theory on the correlation of sweet foods and sex, and then by turning directly to advertising texts through an analysis of magazine ads.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF SWEETS: HEDONISM AND MODESTY
Food’s influence on carnal and spiritual experience has been long celebrated and its links to emotion explored. The Greeks and Romans turned to various fruits and exotic dishes to stimulate sexual pleasures, an approach that has stood the test of time (Painter 2007) and is even celebrated in commercially-sponsored rituals. In the Bible, the fall of man was over an apple and consumption of the fruit of knowledge, of earth, of the serpent, led to man’s appeasement with a thief’s bread in order to draw out alternative ways of thinking about an ethics of existence, ways of living informed by both the rawness of a visceral engagement with the world, and a sense of restraint in the face of excess… Eating, of course, is intimately involved with bodies, and in fact can question what we think we know of the body” (Probyn 2000, 3). Food, it seems, is integral to the construction of the self and social experience.

These views are presented to offer examples of the profundity of meaning and thought that has gone and goes into food. This paper further addresses these points as they inform the discussion of advertising for dessert products and the use of sexuality; in particular, it considers visual and verbal forms of communicating sexuality and the implications of these methods, which will then be used to discuss the formation of femininity through sexuality and food. Finally, various advertisements are examined in order to exemplify how visual and verbal communications convey a nexus of food and sexuality, specifically as they relate to dessert foods. The works previously cited will be called upon to discuss the construction of femininity through sexuality and food.

ADVERTISING AND VISUAL EXPERIENCE OF DESSERT
In addition to social identity, images of desserts insinuate that such foods can serve a more personal service, as providing solace during heartache; more fundamentally, these images participate in self-definition. Dessert and images of it, in other words, are multi-dimensional and multi-purposive. While many of the social and personal features that various desserts serve are a direct result of their physical contents, many of those features are also intertwined
in advertising images that incorporate ritual histories (Otten and Scott 1996), denote contemporaneous ideologies (Fischer 2000), or attempt to create a new image and place for the product through advertising. The created image is perhaps the most powerful, immediate source of information about what is and what matters. In advertising, knowledge (or presumed knowledge) of consumers’ lives is used in constructing images (Bordo 1993). Much of what is learned of food in advertising is presented through visual representation; the other senses (except sound in broadcast media) involved in food consumption, though they may be aroused by visual encounters, are not experienced in the primary sense through media. Thus, exploring the aspects of visual representation that are relevant to food and sexuality in advertising should prove helpful.

Paul Messaris outlines three situations in which visual claims take the place of unacceptable verbal forms when promoting some association with sex (Messaris 1997). First, visual claims are often employed when sex is being used metaphorically and the advertisement is really promising something else; second, visual claims are used when the link between the product and sex is not well received; and third, visual claims replace verbal claims when the type of sex communicated is not socially acceptable. Susan Bordo (1993) suggests when women are positively portrayed with insatiable appetites; these images are used solely metaphorically to imply sexual appetite. According to Messaris, the kind of meaning that cannot be expressed in words, such as the implication that experiencing the food product is equivalent to sex, is expressed metaphorically. The metaphor is used to connect food and sex, but “literal sex and orgasms are not what these ads are really selling” (Messaris 1997, 247). However, food is not always a metaphor for sex, but rather sometimes is depicted as being an erotic experience in and of itself. Some advertising may construct “food as a sexual object of desire, and eating is legitimated as much more than a purely nutritive activity. Rather, food is supposed to supply sensual delight and succor…” (Bordo 1993, 112).

In addition to considering the elements of visual metaphor, Paul Messaris proposes a more fundamental connection between pictorial imagery and real-world experience, suggesting that while visual imagery often may be likened to language in its ability to communicate, in fact it is quite different. Barring a few exceptions such as onomatopoeia, language is an arbitrary system of representation. In contrast, visual imagery is communicated and understood through its likeness or unlikeness to reality. In other words, people interpret imagery by using learned experiences with light, color, shape and other means of determining real-world vision to formulate an integrated image of the world (Messaris 1997). If we are to accept his theory, the potential of visual communication, and in particular of advertising equating food and sex, is incredible for the implication that the pictures encountered in such ads are interpreted through relationships with and understanding of reality. In fact, the visual aspects are integral to the theorizing of food as commodity and advertising’s role and effects in creating food images (Lupton 1996).

However, the current emphasis on visual device should not undermine the role of language and discourse in the experience of food and sexuality. While language and discourse may not be necessary in the carnal experience of food, “language and discourse are integral to the meanings we construct around food—how we interpret and convey to others our sensual experiences in preparing, touching and eating food—which in turn shape our sensual responses” (Lupton 1996, 13). Discourses about verbal and visual, as well as other sensual, communicative methods for food and sex are historically and culturally rooted.

GENDER AND DISCOURSES OF RESTRAINT

Since medieval times, major shifts have occurred in cultural expectations about the control of the self. In modern times, “there are a plethora of unarticulated and overt regulations around the importance of the ‘civilized’ body; that is, the body that is tightly contained, consciously managed, subject to continual self-surveillance as well as surveillance on the part of others” (Lupton 1996, 22). Contemporary cultural meanings and expectations around food and eating practices have been shaped and reproduced via these understandings of the notion of the ‘civilized’ body and tend to be directed towards women. While the constraints over eating originally were based on a concern over appearing delicate and avoiding vulgarity rather than concerns for the shape and size of the body, these constraints over eating were slowly internalized (Lupton 1996, 21) and continued as the mainstream if not idealized images changed.

The ability to abstain, to constrain oneself in eating, is viewed by some as a form of power (Probyn 2000). Advertisers are aware of the ways in which women’s lives seem out of control and, in particular, of the poles of eating disorders and food obsessions; they incorporate these obsessions into their pitches (Bordo 1993, 105). Ironically, in study after study, men have tended to find curvaceous women more attractive, pointing to what may seem like a vast miscalculation on the part of advertisers. However, Messaris argues that in situations in which the female body was not intended to be the end result, as in most product advertising (barring certain situations where advertisers are indeed selling a certain type of body) the proclivity towards thinness is rather a deliberate attempt to suppress the sexual cues and “heighten the sense of the female body as pure status display” (1997, 49). This strategy is particularly prevalent in the fashion industry where the product is actually displayed on the female body, but the result has been a distinct change in the social ideals and conflicting cues represented by the female body.

However, the restraint required of females in contemporary American society has a much richer history than implied by Lupton’s reference to the ‘civilized’ self. Indeed, the history still supports her assertion, but “mythological, artistic, polemical, and scientific discourses from many cultures and eras certainly suggest the symbolic potency of female hunger as a cultural metaphor for unleashed female power and desire…” (Bordo 1993, 116). There are religious roots to this metaphor, as well, explicit in the fall of Eve in the Bible. This implies a greater richness to the discussion. It suggests that female hunger can be both threatening and empowering, for both the male and female, both in the experiences of eating and of sex. Historical understanding is important because many beliefs about food are culturally reproduced, handed down from generation to generation, and are closely tied to family and cultural neighborhoods (Lupton 1996, 25).

Elspeth Probyn presents the relationship between food and sex as a means of exploration, and potentially liberation rather than constraint: “[It] seems to me that the sensual nature of eating now constitutes a privileged optic through which to consider how identities and the relations between sex, gender and power are being renegotiated” (Probyn 2000, 6–7). The “celebration of food as sex and sex as food” implies the limitations of the dominant and culturally accepted uses of sex (Probyn 2000, 70). Thus, Probyn calls into question the strict moralism of constraint often directed at food and sexuality.

Having considered the visual devices as they interact with verbal communication in offering food and sex, certain historical dimensions of the construction of femininity in terms of food and
Sex, and current thought and potential for this topic, I turn to advertising to exemplify and better understand the discussion.

A LOOK AT ADVERTISING TEXTS: DESSERT AND SEXUAL EXPERIENCE

The approach in this study is meant as an attempt at grounding the kind of theoretical and philosophical discussions just considered. All advertisements involving dessert from two years (2000-2002) of four national magazines--two targeted toward men (Esquire and Men's Health) and two toward women (Cosmopolitan and Ladies’ Home Journal)--were pulled and sorted into categories according to type of appeal. In order to gain a greater sense of advertising in other magazines and years, various advertisements were strategically pulled for comparison. The advertisements sampled from these two years, however, betray various systematic representations that will be considered for elaboration on issues of food and sex in advertising, and the additional advertisements are used to propose further possible theoretical considerations. There are three main elements of the advertisements that are considered for analysis—the medium (or type of magazine) in which the advertisement appeared, the product advertised, and the type of appeal used in promoting the product.

Both men's and women's magazines were used to determine whether the gendered representations of dessert consumption in scholarly works was in fact congruent with advertising placement and texts for this study. Not surprisingly, there was, indeed, a significant difference in the occurrence of sex and food representations between the men’s and women’s magazines sampled. Of the men’s magazines examined, only 17 such ads appeared over two years; in comparison, there were 147 messages of food and sex in the women’s magazines—almost nine times more than in the men's magazines. This drastic difference suggests that the gendered associations are at least reproduced in advertising texts and places. The women

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Sex and sexuality are often found in nuanced forms. To account for these nuances and avoid collapsing important messages, advertisements were defined according to one of thirteen terms, and those advertisements that did not fit within any of the terms were coded as “other.” The terms include: personal pleasure (consumer-oriented gratification from the product), indulgence (product-oriented extravagance), familial love, romantic love, addiction (the product eased a craving and was compulsive), home-making/tradition, temptation/weakness (including suggestions of original sin and basic human weakness, but always depicted as playful), humor, human dessert (food personified or humans morphed into the food or food-related product), heavenly/sinful, sexual appeal (direct reference to sex and sex was a specific element of technique), and sexual innuendo (sexual allure was indirect or could be interpreted variously, as with double entendre).

In total, fifteen advertisements for dessert and related products, or advertisements employing dessert in promoting an unrelated product, were found in Esquire in 2000 and 2002. Together, 60% of the dessert advertisements found in Esquire employed sex in their persuasive techniques. Men’s Health contained only two instances of the same dessert-depicting ad.

In contrast, fifty-five instances of such advertisements were found in Cosmopolitan, and eighty-six in Ladies’ Home Journal. Twenty-one of the fifty-five advertisements in Cosmopolitan had an element of sex used in selling the product, ranging from extremely blatant to relatively subtle innuendos. Broken down, 11% of the fifty-five ads used sexual appeal, 27% used sexual innuendo, and together, 38% used sex (including both sexual appeal and sexual innuendo). Finally, of the ninety-two advertisements in Ladies’ Home Journal, only four of them used sex as an appeal; however, numerous more used love, both romantic and familial, as an appeal, as well as love for oneself (in the form of pampering). A more detailed description of selected advertisements provides a deeper analysis of the imagery. Because only one advertisement fitting for this analysis appeared in Men’s Health, that magazine will not be considered in greater depth, although the lack of food, and specifically dessert, advertisements is noteworthy and is included in analysis.

Although Esquire contained the largest percentage, Cosmopolitan contained the largest number of dessert advertisements that portrayed sex as an element of persuasion; further, the sexual imagery in this magazine is particularly more blatant than that found in the other three. In selling space to advertisers, Cosmopolitan suggests the magazine was “created to help contemporary women achieve their goals and live fuller lives. Features cover a broad range of topics including beauty, health and fitness, fashion, relationships and careers. The magazine uses a unique approach, presenting points of view and honest advice much like women would receive from a friend” (Bacon’s Magazine Directory 2002, 2349). This description, however, does not adequately represent the amount of sex found in editorial. For example, cover stories from the magazine include: “Sex tricks only Cosmo would know,” (January 2000), “Supersize your sex life: Take home 10 nasty tips from the world’s lustiest lovers. Trust us, he’ll never get his fill of you,” (March 2000)—the list continues with every cover promising at least one story about sex. As well, there are stories that are not specifically about sex as an act but rather unabashedly use sexual appeal for some other purpose, quite often beauty: “Sexy summer beauty” (June 2000); “Have a sex-kitten summer: 33 beauty ideas that will make him purrrrrrr,” (July 2000). Thus, sex is a prominent and important component of this magazine and there is a connection between the content of the editorials and the number of advertisements using sexual appeal. The editorial of this magazine clearly suggests a proper fit for dessert advertisers who wish to use a sexual element in their appeals.

However, another dimension must be present—perhaps the gender element at the nexus of food and sex—in the greater number of ads with sexual imagery and appeal found in Cosmopolitan because Esquire, with fewer such ads, is self-described with regular features on sex and relationships (Bacon’s Magazine Directory 2002, 1437). Cover stories from Esquire editions with advertisements for dessert include “53 things a man should know... about sex” (2000). However, this magazine does not have the predominance of sex on its cover that Cosmopolitan has, and indeed, not every cover contains references to sex, despite the previous description.

Ladies’ Home Journal, in contrast to Cosmopolitan, “Focuses on the interests of today’s at-home and working mother (aged 30-45), with features on decorating, entertaining, news, fitness, nutrition, fashion and beauty, parenting, celebrities, family relationships, and today’s contemporary lifestyle” (Bacon’s Magazine Directory 2002, 2360). The actual median age of Ladies’ Home Journal female readers is 47.7, slightly older than the proclaimed audience (MediaMarkt Research Magazine Qualitative Audiences Report, Spring 1998). In contrast, the median age for Cosmopolitan is 31.3, for Men’s Health is 35.9, and for Esquire is 38.2. Cover stories for Ladies’ Home Journal do not include the kind of sexual element driving many of Cosmopolitan’s. ‘They include,
“Always hungry? Appetite tamers for body and soul,” (March 2000) and “Dream desserts made easy” (April 2002). Of the two years sampled, only three instances of sex-related articles appeared on the cover. The types of advertisements found in this magazine, then, are predictably different than those found in the other four magazines.

With consideration to issues of magazine content, more detailed descriptions of advertisements selected provide an impression of the various types of appeals found in dessert ads from the four magazines. The first example from *Cosmopolitan* is for Godiva Liqueur. In the foreground are three bottles of Godiva and two glasses filled with ice and Godiva. In the background are shadows of a man and a woman, with the woman holding an apple in front of the man’s face. The copy reads, “As if you weren’t already weak enough. No true chocolate lover can resist delicious original Godiva Liqueur, creamy Godiva White Chocolate Liqueur, or rich Godiva Cappuccino Liqueur. Let them inspire you” (*Cosmopolitan* January 2000). The clear reference is to the temptation in Eden compared with the bliss of Godiva. Presumably, both the man and woman depicted in the shadows have given into their weakness, or are about to. Linking the temptation of Godiva to the temptation of man and woman confounds the notion of spiritual restraints with a tone of sexuality that denotes weakness, because in this case weakness is rewarded. This method of employing innermost elements of the human psyche and religious references, as they have developed throughout history, seems popular with food advertisers, linking biological impulses with the abilities or weaknesses of the human mind. For example, an advertisement explicitly using an analogy to the Garden of Eden ran in the May 2000 issue of *Cosmopolitan*. An enlarged apple fills the page of the ad for Jeremy’s Microbatch Ice Creams with only the word “Temptation” sharing the major space of the ad. At the bottom of the page is a picture of a pint of the ice cream—Eve’s Sinful Cider—next to the caption, “We can’t make enough of this stuff” (*Cosmopolitan* May 2000). The juxtaposition of the image of the apple and the picture of the pint of “sinful” cider ice cream leaves little room for misinterpretation.

For reference, a Godiva advertisement was pulled from a December 2002 issue of *InStyle*. This Godiva ad shows the bottles similarly portrayed, but in the bottom right-hand corner. In the forefront is the body of a woman, her head decapitated in the cropping of the picture, holding in one hand a bowl of ice cream and in the other Godiva Liqueur. In the background is a handsome man sitting on a couch in wait. The copy reads, “Drizzle it all OVER your DESSERT. (You may even try it on the ice cream).” Also provided is a recipe for “The Night Cap.” The copy makes the reference to sex blantant and tells the viewer how to interpret the image using sex. The use of sex in these Godiva advertisements is multi-dimensional.

First, the reference is metaphorical and, as Messaris suggested, sex is employed in appeal, but the advertisement is really promising something else. It may be promising great taste or an enjoyable gustatory sensation. But these ads are more complicated because of the fact that Godiva is an alcoholic beverage. Ironically, both despite and because of the suppressant nature of alcohol, it is often linked to sexual encounters. Finally, the translation in these ads may be considered literal, particularly in light of the dual potential they assert—the liqueur can be drizzled on the ice cream or on the man, who becomes in this situation a literal dessert. The ice cream and the man are interchangeable, both becoming sexual objects of desire. Other times the product actually is depicted in such a way as to make a “human dessert,” particularly when the product itself is not a food product but is endowed with properties (color, smell) of sweets. *Esquire* ran an ad for RedEnvelope online gifts promoting gourmet chocolate body paint. The two-page spread depicts a woman sitting between a man’s straddled legs, both donning tattoos drawn in chocolate. They are smiling or laughing as she licks his nose and the caption reads, “Perhaps this year, more babies will be born in November. Gourmet Body Paint. A decidedly different Valentine’s Day gift” (*Esquire* February 2000). In this example, food is not simply a metaphor for sex, but a tool of the sexual experience.

In an advertisement for www.chocolatetogo.com, the advertisers depict a specialty basket “overflowing with gourmet delights… For a little naughty indulgence we have added our body chocolate with a satin blind fold… To add the finishing touches to this breathtaking arrangement we have added a beautifully decorated angelic mint chocolate truffle heart” (*Esquire* February 2000). This ad contains elements of love, sex, indulgence, and a heavenly appeal—some products in the basket are literally meant to top the body and to be eaten off of the body, and in being such, they are sinful in a delicious, and by extension, positive manner. Brought together by food, these otherwise seemingly disparate elements create a harmonious appeal, just as they do for other products in other ads. On the surface, whether we have become accustomed to them or they have a more fundamental connection, these elements are in accord.

These ads, creating an intimate connection between persons and desserts, even appeal to a shared sense of humor and dialogue, as in ads for M&M’s in which these chocolate candies are personified and put into various human situations. In particular, one of these advertisements depicts a “sensual” female green M&M’s (many Americans are aware of the sexual connotations of the green M&M’s) as if she is posing in a fashion magazine; the copy tells the reader she is “Eye Candy: What does this luscious chocolate ‘M&M’s’ wear to stand out from the guys in the bag? Attitude” (*Cosmopolitan* May 2000, June 2000). As Lupton writes about chocolate, “It has become a stereotype that chocolate is a sign of romance, also symbolizing luxury, decadence, indulgence, reward, sensuousness and femininity” (Lupton 1996, 35), and has become conflated with representations of the emotional experience of being “in love” (Lupton 1996). Chocolate, in fact, is the gift of choice for the American commercial holiday of love—Valentine’s Day—and this message is found in chocolates from Godiva to Ferraro Rocher. Godiva compares its chocolates to a very strong love, insinuating a connection to marriage: “Godiva Chocolate will make her heart skip a beat. If she wins the ring, you may need to know CPR” (*Esquire* February 2002). Similarly, “Rocher is perfect for Valentines: You’ll fulfill the expectation of getting something round, shiny and gold… Luscious chocolate, crunchy hazelnut, crispy wafer and always in good taste” (*Ladies’ Home Journal* February 2000). Chocolates have a physiological and culturally reinforced association with love and sensuality, emotion, sensation and the rituals of these embodied experiences.

The example of chocolate seems most appropriate in justifying the assertion that “in eating we experience different parts of our bodies: from the physical reaction as we bite into something, past experiences also flock to accompany the savouring of the moment. The same could, of course, be said of sex” (Probyn 2000, 60). We have seen, in the course of this analysis, chocolate as an integral component of the sexual experience in ads for body paint, as a means of showing love for family and for heterosexual partners, and as a food of personal pleasure and indulgence—it can be experienced sensually between two people, socially within a larger social group, and individually for personal reward and indulgence. But, as demonstrated in the predominance of dessert and chocolate advertising in women’s magazines, chocolate is not only viewed as a selfish, even sinful, indulgence, but as one with gendered implica-
Of course, the issues of food and sexuality and virtue are not so happily coexistent, and often these very same elements can cause great tension, discomfort, and even harm. The conflation of the human body, sexuality and food is not always depicted by food advertisers as a positive phenomenon. Such is the case in a campaign for Nutri-Grain bars. These ads portray a prominent body part of a person, most often but not solely a woman, enlarge it and supplant it with some food that is fattening and therefore sinful, as the copy slyly points out, warning the viewer, “respect yourself in the morning.” The double entendre, “Respect yourself in the morning” insinuates into these ads an element of sinfulness and, importantly, of tainted sexuality (Cosmopolitan April 2002). Of course, the medium in which an advertisement appears is an important element of the overall effect. This ad for Nutri-Grain depicting the male figure is a fruitful example of why this may be so. Women are not the only victims of this kind of disrespectful portrayal because here we see a man in a similar situation. However, the advertisement, just as did the others for this product, ran in Cosmopolitan. The scope of this study does not rule out, nor does it attempt to rule out, the possibility that this ad, as well, appears in mediums directed toward men that are outside of the scope of the magazines considered here. Nonetheless, the fact that it is presented in Cosmopolitan suggests an entirely different reaction to it—we may see both men and women who appear to need some directive of restraint, but it is the women to whom this message, through the medium of a woman’s magazine, is most forcefully directed. In this example, food–or more accurately, restraint from food–is portrayed as a form of self-love.

One advertisement for romantic love was found in Esquire and one in Cosmopolitan, both for chocolates. Interestingly, all but two of these advertisements exemplifying food as love come from Ladies’ Home Journal, the magazine that caters to women aged 30–45, with the actual median age of readers at 47.7 years. The magazine catering to mothers, often considered in situations where they are deprived of the satisfaction of and appreciation for their work, holds the most number of examples promising the love they desire in return for the food that they provide. Men and children are most often depicted as the natural recipients of such love and care, as opposed to natural providers and insidiously, females are depicted as providers, with a strong failure by advertisers to portray them as proper recipients of such love and, by extension, of the fulfillment of food (Bordo 1993, 124). If we are to believe this theory that women are not depicted as appropriate recipients of culinary demonstrations of love, it is important for what it implies about the cultural value of femininity.

Food consumption is both ingestion and incorporation of the food and of the meaning of that food. So, the saying, “the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach” is more than a casual cliché. In ingesting the food, meant to denote the time put into preparation, the taste, the sensual experience of the food, one ingests all of those meanings, together with the experience of love. Many beliefs and practices of food and consumption are culturally constructed and reproduced, passed down through generations and articulated in history. Food both links us to and separates us from previous generations and our sense of place within the scope of humanity. But this does not mean that we are without power to change the meanings that we ingest, or that food has always to be about power at all.

CONCLUSION

Food is nourishment, but “food, as a commodity, is consumed not simply for its nourishing or energy-giving properties, or to alleviate hunger pangs, but because of the cultural values that surround it. By the act of purchasing and consuming the food as commodity, those values are transferred to the self… Such commodities are central to the development and articulation of subjectivity” (Lupton 1996, 23). In the modern world, in which food competitors are vying for value and meaning on vastly similar products, it seems that it is they, the advertisers, who determine the meaning of consumption. But as we are ‘articulated’ subjects, determined by the products we consume, we are as much, if not more, “‘articulating’ subjects: through our enactment of practices we reforge new meanings, new identities for ourselves” (Probyn 2000, 18). Through the choices and practices of food consumption, not only do we convey love, enjoy taste, texture, sharing, stealing away, we have the power to produce and enact through nourishment and subsistence, the very core of our being, our sexuality. And, as Probyn suggests in her criticism of dominant mores, we do not have to be limited to Puritan standards of consumption, but rather have a world of food ideology from which to draw. Belk and Costa (1998) suggest that researchers “might learn something about the broader stereotype that women are the consummate consumers of the Western world,” (2) and that investigating views of chocolate consumption could provide understandings about more general issues of consumption, including indulgence and control, as well as gender. Similarly, given that advertisers use “symbols of public rituals to invest goods with meaning,” (Ottes and Scott 1996, 34) including food consumption rituals and understandings, and given that advertising and consumption rituals interact in creating and modifying culture in the processes of meaning transfer (Ottes and Scott 1996), exploring advertising texts could be mutually informative in understanding articulations of gender, sexuality and consumption.

This analysis is an attempt to ground the discourses of food and sexuality in the imagery and messages of dessert and sex presented in one of the most powerful purveyors of cultural symbols. This study was limited to only four magazines, and it is possible that the combination of other magazine’s content and audience might provide a different perspective or suggest further nuances in the messages. More recent advertising texts might be explored to see if there have been further changes over time. The increased focus on men as consumers may alter the landscape of consumption messages of food and sex. And the difference in the types of messages found in Cosmopolitan and in Ladies’ Home Journal suggest an age differential that might be explored further—at what point in a woman’s life and why does it seem, from the advertising texts, that a woman’s interest in dessert products turns from concerns about dessert and sex to dessert and love.

Exploring the current dominant uses of food and sexuality in modern media advertising, as I have attempted to begin here, is critical in understanding how we may reinforce those values that remain positive and sustain our humanity, and how we may change those that are negative and destructive. Perhaps even more importantly, understanding the fascination in the connection between food and sex provides a creative and potentially informative way of exploring, experiencing and developing our humanity.

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Gender Values and Brand Communication: The Transfer of Masculine Representations to Brand Narratives
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Simon Nyeck, Essec Business School, France

ABSTRACT

Through a socio-historic perspective we show how the masculine identity is evolving from monolith masculinity to contemporary masculinities. This research seeks understanding if and how these new cultural values are transferred to brands communication. Using a semiotic approach, masculinities, femininities and their relationships are underlined by using a Reason-Emotion semantic axis. A corpus of twenty brands communication of masculine and feminine sectors is analysed with a past/present perspective (historical). Study reveals an evolution of men’s representations in brands communication. The theoretical implications of the findings are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Masculine identity is an issue since gender is a “blurred” construct that is changing depending on time and context (Kacen, 2000). Roles and representations of men are evolving today in western societies (Welzer-Lang, 2004; de Singly, 2001) posing significant challenges for marketers and researchers. This paper discusses changes in men’s representations in brand communications understood as the result of changing social and cultural practices—or the result of “historical contingencies” (Schroeder and Zwick, 2004). Changes in contemporary society among masculine conceptions of private life, as well as appearance and beauty are of a growing research interest as they are accompanied by changes in the marketplace (Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes, 1999, Dano, Roux. and Nyeck. 2003). Companies are developing the male cosmetic market, the jewellery and fashion. This paper seeks to understand how brands communications targeting men adapt to this cultural postmodern trend of a shift from a traditional monolith masculinity founded on virility to new representations of the masculine in touch with some traditional feminine values linked to beauty and emotions.

First, the paper describes the conceptual framework of masculine identity, explaining how the later is moving from a traditional masculinity to multiple masculinities. The method, based on analysis on historical secondary data allows portraying masculine representations evolution. A semiotic analysis of past and present brands communication among different products categories (watches, fashion, and skincare) is performed. Finally, the theoretical implications of the findings are discussed.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND: MASCULINE ARCHETYPES EVOLUTION

Recently journalists like Mark Simpson or advertisers like Marian Salzman for Euro-RSCG (see Tuncay, 2006) launched many words supposed to label segments of men: *Metrosexuals, Retrosexuals, Ubersexuals, Pomosexuals*...Moreover, in the marketplace, companies are successful developing the skincare, the jewellery etc. But then how do we move from a commercial construct to an academic one?

Some attempts to an understanding of men and masculinity through a consumer research perspective exist but are still extremely limited. Kimmel & Tissier-Desbordes (1999) mentioned a threat to universal dominance of man that is becoming manifest in contemporary society that leads to a necessity of anticipation of changes in consumption behaviour. They noticed an increasing number of ads depicting male as sex objects. Then from a producer, the male consumer turned to also a consumer/consumed body with an “inversion of the male gaze” as a consequence (Patterson & Elliott, 2002; Schroder & Zwick 2004). Also, Elliott & Elliott (2005) suggest that even though images of male bodies are on the increase in advertising, still consumer research in this area is limited. Yet, we argue with Schroeder & Zwick that masculine representations are part of the construction of masculine identity and should be more researched within the flow of historical images.

More broadly, we think that the socio-historical framework helps capturing the evolution of masculine rep and understanding the construction of masculine archetypes by the marketplace. Holt & Thompson (2004) showed how North-American archetypes are imbedded in US socio-history. The European context—especially in France and Italy—suffers a lack of conceptualisation on masculinity as a cultural construct and is being of a renewed interest area in social sciences (Caru, Cova, Tissier-Desbordes, 2004, Welzer-Lang, 2004, La Cecla, 2002). We try in this paper to analyse the dominant discourse on masculine identity through French history and contribute to an understanding of evolving masculinity in brand narratives.

Traditional monolith masculinity

During the aristocratic regime, men were as concerned as women with make up, wigs, perfumes etc. It was not considered as effeminate or homosexual and even the *Précieus* of the 17th Century were not stigmatised. The aristocratic period had a unisex model of appearance. Also, the aesthetic ideal of beauty was a displacement for leisure and absence of work as these were signs of lower classes. Therefore, white skin, absence of muscles, very ornamented clothing were a social distinction issue.

“The 19th century inaugurated the artefact of the virile man and the feminine woman.” (Bourdieu, 1998, p 29.). As historians of beauty, historians of arts and philosophers, Bourdieu considered the 19th century as a rupture in gender role and THE explicit period for “masculine domination”. After the French revolution, the bourgeoisie became the dominant class. It operated a strong division between men and women upon appearance (Lipovetsky, 1988). For the first time, men from upper, dominant class started to work. They adopted a “serious”, functional appearance by contrast with the ornamented aristocratic clothing made for idle men. Men were not to talk about clothing that had to be sober; uniform otherwise they would be considered as non-virile, effeminate. The traditional society divided gender by containing women in the private sphere, as mothers, housewives, but also as foils for their husbands: through their beauty, the social and professional success of their husbands was admired as mentioned by historian of beauty Georges Vigarello (2004). Thus, appearance still remained an issue of social distinction.

In this context, dandyism linked to romanticism took place in reaction to this recent norm of virility by adopting a different style, still using make up, being slender etc.. Different intellectuals adopted dandyism as Baudelaire, Nerval, or Barbey d’Aurevilly, who claimed: “Appearance is for dandies as for women”. Thus, dandyism was seen as a way to “effeminate the masculine” during
Multiple contemporary masculinities

The erosion of the stereotype of virility went through the success of the two stigmatised figures during the traditional society: women and homosexuals. The success of women emancipation movements during the 60’s, their massive entry in the professional and public life, previously reserved only to men: in France, the right to vote (1944), the end of educational segregation, end of marital guardianship (1965), professional parity between male and female (1983)...and the control of their body (contraception, abortion in 1975). On the other hand, during the 70’s a positive gay culture emerged. Even the word “gay” is much more neutral then the pathological word “homosexual”. The gay culture and its aesthetic widespread especially in fashion: designers became of a big influence even among heterosexuals.

These changes in contemporary society had an impact on the masculine identity in private and public life. Work is not that a major element of the masculine identity as a vast majority of women works also. Moreover, the masculine identity is no more sufficiently defined by contrast with femininity as in the traditional model. Then, in postmodern societies gender is a “blurred” construct. As women did invest public life, men seem to invest new territories, as the private life, domestic life, intimacy or proximity with no exclusive reference to the traditional virile model (Welzer-Lang, 2004). For example, as noticed recently by a sociologist of fatherhood in her interviews with French men: “we see “new fathers” who try to develop “fatherhood models” claiming their part of femininity and pretending abandoning some of their virile values...” (Ferrand, 2001, p194-195). A kind of re-composition of men and women territories is operating, since exclusive male “enclaves” are somehow disappearing (Caru, Cova, Tissier Desbordes 2004).

This change does not mean that the universal masculine dominance has disappeared in postmodern societies or that men trucked their values to adopt feminine values. It means that there is a juxtaposition of the opposites, a balance/negotiation between feminine and masculine values according to de Singly (2001, P163).

Then from a monolith, traditional, reason driven masculinity, contemporary societies move now to multiple masculinities. Men seem more and more involved in traditional feminine territories characterised by emotion and appearance (Castelain-Meunier, 2005). This raises a question of a coming back to a masculine “work of appearance” prohibited in Europe since the 19th century. Renewed interest in masculine beauty is reflected by the media and the successful development of a range of products previously associated with the feminine (Jewellery, make up...). We analyse this as a manifestation of the emergence of postmodern values that emphasise appearance, the body and emotion as key cultural values that might apply equally to men and women (Baudrillard, 1970; Lipovetsky, 1988; Le Breton, 1992, Maffesoli, 1993).

Construction of gender archetypes

To understand the new masculine representations and their cultural codes, cultural anthropology is relevant. An inductive approach was adopted. When confronted to the data, we needed to structure the meaning coming from this large amount of images. A semiotic square (Greimas & Courtés 1979; Floch 1995) is used to organize and structure meanings in the western society. Jean-Marie Floch applies the semiotic square in a reduced form allowing to structure meanings of narratives (2001, P145). We use this tool, since our purpose is to underline the values and meanings that are linked to the entities or qualities found on the connotative level. Greimas’ schema is useful since it illustrates the full complexity of any given semantic term (seme). Greimas points out that any given seme entails its opposite or “contrary.” “Reason” for example is understood in relation to its contrary, “Emotion”. Rather than having a binary opposition, however, Greimas stated that the opposition, “Reason” vs “Emotion,” suggests a contradictory pair, i.e., “UnReason” vs “UnEmotion”. The semiotic square is relevant to understand cultural representations, such as gender archetypes (2002, P32). Semantic axis opposing Reason/Emotion was chosen as it helps defining the masculine vs feminine values. (Badinter, 1999; Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes, 1999; La Cecla, 2002; Vigarello, 2004; Welzer-Lang, 2004)

Women’s Archetypes:

But, as we have seen earlier the masculine identity has evolved as regard to changes among the feminine identity. Also, as stated by Schroeder and Zwick “Masculinity is –semiologically- irrevocably connected with, opposed to and in relation to femininity” (2004, p23).Thus, we have several stereotypes of femininity that we can also emphasise through the same semiotic square Reason/Emotion (see Figure 1):

Reason: Refers to the executive woman, who deeply made of her traditional masculine values related to rationality, performance, work, power and sober aesthetic. She is career oriented and equal to traditional man seeking, success. She plays with some traditional codes of masculine aesthetic, like the wear of sober suits, very “corporate”. She is subject.

Emotion: Refers to a world of sensitivity, experience, aesthetic as of a very traditional woman, who is private life and family oriented. Also, she is very concerned by appearance, and stages beauty as a “social capital”. She is object.

Un Emotion: Refers to a “macha” or a woman who avoids any sign of emotion and work of appearance that characterise femininity by adopting a masculine language, appearance and behaviour, looking strong, tough vs. weak woman. She seeks to be only a subject referring to reason.

Un reason: Refers to an ultra-feminine woman, who denies reason, rationality, power or very sober aesthetic codes: she refuses any sign of traditional masculinity. Seduction and appearance are a must with a sexy attitude. She is an ultra-object.

Reason+Emotion: Refers to the androgyne figure or the postmodern woman juxtaposing reason and emotion, rational-
ity and experience, power and negotiation, authority and seduction, being also object and subject. Then, she is equally involved in career, work plus family and seduction. She seeks success and harmony in both public and private sphere playing different codes, still privileging the work of appearance but also keen to be considered as efficient in public life.

Un Reason, Un Emotion: Characterises reification as theoretical position not evoked in the literature on masculinity.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

The research objective is to describe masculine representations evolution in brands communications. The research question
is: “Is there a shift in brands communication from a traditional representation of men to multiple modern masculinities?”

A semiotic approach is performed to understand the meanings of brand narratives. An inductive approach was adopted. When confronted to the data, we needed to structure the meaning coming from this large amount of images. As the aim is to identify meanings of brand narratives, semiotics is far relevant (Greimas & Courtès, 1986, Courtès, 1991, Floch, 1990). Qualitative and interpretative methodologies are legitimate especially when dealing with appearance (Heilbrunn and Hetzel, 2003; Dano, Roux et Nyec, 2003).

A semiotic approach analyses visual signifiers (colours, forms, values) with some conceptual categories (Culture/Nature; Reason/Emotion…). Therefore, we structure our brands communications analysis around categories of visual signifiers vs. conceptual categories (signified). We analyse gestures, forms, colours/lighting, brands signature, product placement, verbal text that we confront to conceptual categories that we defined earlier: Reason/Emotion; Reason+Emotion/ Un Reason/ Un Emotion. These conceptual categories allowed us to exhibit masculine archetypes.

Past and present brands communication are analysed (ads, web sites, products and stores visuals) to describe masculine representations evolution. We collected as much data as possible from web sites, products and stores visuals) to describe masculine representations evolution. We collected as much data as possible. We structured our brands communications analysis around categories of visual signifiers vs. conceptual categories (signified). We analyse gestures, forms, colours/lighting, brands signature, product placement, verbal text that we confront to conceptual categories that we defined earlier: Reason/Emotion; Reason+Emotion/ Un Reason/ Un Emotion. These conceptual categories allowed us to exhibit masculine archetypes.

Past and present brands communication are analysed (ads, web sites, products and stores visuals) to describe masculine representations evolution. We collected as much data as possible from web sites, products and stores visuals) to describe masculine representations evolution. We analyzed all the data gathered to reflect brand’s discourse evolution on masculinity.

“Until late 80’s, the historical rupture we retained as is marking the emergence of postmodern or hypermodern signs (Firat, Sherry, Venkatesh, 1994; Maffesoli, 1990; Lipovetsky, 2002).

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Until the early 80’s, the vast majority of brands represented men as traditional, reason-driven, even within the beauty and lingerie sectors (Figure 2).

The next table reveals a shift of 25% of brands from a unique traditional representation to a more diverse masculine representation in the 90’s. Male representations include some emotional values, traditionally associated with the feminine, mainly for appearance/lingerie sector. Even a traditional masculine universe of Champaign (Moet) is using very feminine codes. The next section will discuss more deeply this change among men representations (Figure 3).

### DISCUSSION

Our analysis portrays an evolution among masculine representations in brand discourses shifting from a unique representation of men to multiple masculinities.

The postmodern man: a) In the masculine sector, High Tech sector shifts to design, creativity (Apple) or the relational (Nokia). b) Hom as an underwear brandshifts from a discourse on masculine attributes to a juxtaposition of a sexy body attitude, with some traditional thematic as competition and performance. Hom is an underwear brand only for men. Until 2002, the brand emphasised a discourse on traditional masculinity, a brand that speaks to “real men”. One of the oldest ad by the brand in the 70’s shows two very dark hair, “Latin style” men wearing shirts and tie, sitting in a very confident attitude, legs opened, hands near the genitals, chest right, one of them is smoking a cigar. They seem to discuss typical male concerns ignoring the woman in the background, standing between them that looks bored and absent. The ad says “Hometom by Hom For men that are (real) men” (1970). During the 80’s and 90’s, the brand continued with a caricature of a traditional masculine discourse, using humour, staging the physical attributes of men, the specific masculine need for convenience and products performance. The last ad staging traditional discourse says “stay natural” (2001) which means not artificial. “Artificial” in Baudrillard’s terminology is specifically dedicated to the register of feminine seduction (1988).

But then, since the year 2003, Hom has shifted to a more rich and complex discourse juxtaposing very opposite values. Ads show very sexy male bodies, playing “100% seduction” (2003), wearing a new kind of underwear made of fishnet or lace (“To drive you crazy”, 2005). The brand termed this “lingerie for men”. The semantic switch from underwear to lingerie for men reveals and legitimises an appropriation by men of some elements of a very traditional feminine territory of seduction. Also, the brand encourages men to adopt these new practices (“dare the minimum!” 2004) responding to men’s fear being out the “safety zone” (Diego Rinallo, EACR conference 2007) or “acceptable” norm of masculine appearance or. The sexy male bodies are with no ambiguity about their masculine shape, very muscular, athletic, under control and dynamic. Still, many commentators classified the brand as addressing only gays. But, when digging deeper in the brand narratives especially through its website visuals, then the complex dialectic Man/Woman is displayed. The man by Hom is staged as alternatively subject or object in the relationship. The same character is staged playing a traditional role of seduction and at another

### TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semiotic square, (Floch, 1995)</th>
<th>Masculinities</th>
<th>Femininities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reason</td>
<td>Traditional Man</td>
<td>Executive Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotion</td>
<td>Melancholic Man</td>
<td>Traditional Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un Emotion</td>
<td>“Tough Man”</td>
<td>“Macha” (Ultra-Masculine Woman)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un Reason</td>
<td>Effeminate Man</td>
<td>Ultra-feminine Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason+ Emotion</td>
<td>Postmodern Man</td>
<td>Postmodern Woman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Footnotes

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moment wearing very delicate underwear, in an usual suggestive posture, surrounded by a very romantic, feminine decor (cosy room, velour curtains, satin sheet, Champaign glasses...). This is consistent with recent sociological trends observed by Castelain-Meunier (2005). She noticed in her interviews with French men a “new intimist masculine culture”, p 72. Seduction, the need to adapt women’s demands in the private/domestic sphere are becoming of an important masculine matters as compared with men she interviewed in the 80’s. Also the brand displays a double narrative of fatherhood:-a traditional, institutional father/son wearing the same product and sharing a moment of initiation to a “masculine sport” (Sailing,...);-a “relational fatherhood” (Ferrand, 2001): father and young daughter in the living room, man in underwear, relaxed, reading a magazine while smiling to his daughter who is also reading/ playing. The style of these images reminds of very usual inserts in female magazines. Again these visuals by the brand reflect recent trends observed by sociologist Ferrand (2001) as a claim by some men for a greater involvement in their children education not only with an institutional role but also being sensitive, playful regardless to a normative vision of fatherhood.

Moreover, the fragmentation is expressed when the same character staged also practising very virile sport (Boxing), being the best on the podium in a swimming competition (performance), or in a classic mise-en-scene of Man and mastery of nature.

Then, Hom as a brand shifted from a monolith discourse of virility to a more complex, multiple masculinity displaying a
fragmented postmodern man switching easily from a role to another, juxtaposing very opposite values. Social status is only suggested through the furniture of the domestic space but work is absent from narratives. Focus on the self: private life and leisure are also signs of the postmodern spirit.

The Melancholic man: Aubade is a feminine lingerie brand that extended very recently to men. Brand narratives show a shift from a traditional masculine representation to an emotional man. New man by Aubade becomes an object of desire competing with woman in this feminine territory. Old visuals by the brand show a woman in an exclusive role of seduction as passive object, offered to male gaze and pleasure (male dominance). Explicitly the brand addressed men while promoting feminine products: “Aubade for a Man” (‘70’s and ‘80’s). The brand also innovated to meet male expectations of realism, pragmatism, efficiency even in a context of seduction (very far from feminine matters): “Aubade eliminates seducers nightmare...a hook in the front and it is open!” (1974). Women where then conceived as peripheral by the brand while men where central, exclusive decision makers.

In the middle of the years 2000, the brand by launching men underwear clashed from the previous perspective displaying a new discourse, or “inverting the gaze” (Patterson and Elliott, 2002). Men that become also objects of seduction, compete now with women in this very feminine bastion: “rob her limelight” (2005). Male archetype by the brand moved from the very “Traditional man” to the “Melancholic man”, emotion and seduction oriented. He is object in all visuals valued through appearance and the body. But also, under the dominance of female gaze and desire, in a passive/submitted configuration (“Resist her in vain”, 2006).

The traditional man: a/ In the masculine sector: Rolex sticks to the theme of power. Omega’s role models (Schumacher) emphasise traditional rep of men. Label 5 focuses on the product in a very sober mise-en-scène. Campaigned brands Dom Perignon stages a traditional gender role perspective. Lexus discourse is only focused on competition and performance, Mercedes sticks to status and power (“Masterpiece”), while BMW celebrates “the pleasure to drive” the ultimate powerful car. Sportswear brands communicate massively on performance, using athletes as heroes. b/ In the fashion and beauty sectors, more related to femininity and appearance, Boss (fashion and perfume) exhibits success and classic aesthetic codes of masculinity. Ralph Lauren follows the same trend (“fragrances that go beyond fashion”). Gio (Armani bestseller perfume) stages a classic Italian man-subject, seducer and concerned with appearance but with no ambiguity about his virility conceived as traditional. Also, skincare brands communicate on products performance while promoting beauty (Nivea) and well-being (Biotherm).

Also, we can briefly evoke how the transfer of masculine rep operates.

Different ranges of elements of discourse are displayed by brands to transfer masculine representations from traditional one to multiple ones. We have noticed very traditional themes as described earlier: reference to work space (Boss); the use of role models as heroes (fictonal: James Bond through Pierce Brosnan (Omega)/ Real: exceptional athletes as Schumacher for Omega; some narratives concentrate also on explicit technical performance of products using expert terms and/or figures (car industry, skincare).

Masculine representations are now also transferred by referring to design as source of emotion (Apple). Private sphere and intimacy are displayed with quasi absence of reference to work or social status (Hom, Aubade); the presence of a feminine caution as a mean of “reassurance” for the very masculine fear to be considered as effeminate (explicitly by Nivea, implicitly by Aubade); humour, is also a mean by which masculine values are transferred suggesting less drama when investing some traditional feminine territories by men (Hom). Also, the representation of a man as peripheral and a woman as subject contributes to transfer new masculine representations: Moet addresses women in priority in a mise-en-scène where men are absent or objects.

CONCLUSION

The research objective was to describe evolution of male representations in brands communication. The findings show that a growing number of brands are in touch with the postmodern society, staging diverse masculinities. This is in line with the transfer of cultural values from the “culturally constituted world” (e.g. society) to products through fashion, media and opinion leaders (Mc Cracken 1986).

Still, the dominance of a traditional masculine representation is consistent with the literature since these values are still dominant while postmodern values are just emerging (Lipovetsky, 1988; Maffesoli, 1990; Firat, Sherry, Venkatesh, 1994).

This research revealed a different representations of masculinity in brands communication among masculine/feminine sectors. For the masculine sectors (wine, cars, spirits), there is still a strong emphasis on the traditional discourse even if we noticed a double narrative targeting men: -portraying an irruption of the postmodern values; -while sticking mainly to a traditional discourse. By contrast, appearance and beauty sectors (fashion, cosmetics, fragrance, lingerie) that stage new masculine representations mainly communicate on sensorial and hedonic values (Hom, Aubade). In the masculine sectors a lack of legitimacy to adopt this new masculine rep might be a significant reason, while beauty/appearance sectors seem much likely legitimate to follow this postmodern trend. Future research is needed to understand this difference.

Limits

While the study reveals the existence of new representations of men Vs monolith traditional masculinity, further research is needed to explain: 1/ How does the transfer of these new representations to consumers operate? 2/ How do consumers integrate this emergent discourse in their own system of value

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APPENDICE
Some Representative Visuals By Brands

HUGO BOSS

1989
2003
2006

1974

AUBAIDE (PRESENT)

2005
2006
2007

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Marketing and the Other: A Study of Women in the Sailing Marketplace and its Implications for Marketing Discourse
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ABSTRACT
This paper analyses the concept and function of the “Other” (De Beauvoir 1949) in marketing discourse—a consumer space that illuminates the tension between the anticipated or established demographic according to stereotypical cultural norms and the possibility of an unseen demographic that remains unacknowledged and thus unidentified by the marketplace. The paper draws its theoretical foundations from postmodern feminist theory which essentially argues that gender, sex roles and many other social roles are little more than performances or representations of a constructed social order. This project of feminist signification in a postmodern culture where only representation is achievable has given rise to a plethora of representation projects and critiques by feminists who seek to parody, pastiche and mimic the issue of gender.

This discussion of the Other takes place in the sailing culture, looking at the actual role women play in sailing and their relegation to an invisible space in the marketing discourses that cater to the traditionally masculine sailing world. Drawing from various sources, the paper performs a semiotic/intertextual analysis of the data. The analytical model adopted for this analysis is a semiotically influenced intertextual method that allows for texts to be interpreted for their signs and symbol and then read against other material. In this study, the combined semiotic and intertextual approach has enabled the identification of seemingly absent consumers and allowed a better understanding of how this strategy of absence can be found throughout a variety of advertising, marketing and discursive arenas.

This paper, thus, explores implications for marketing in an unixed, liminal culture. The research found that racing imagery is embedded in dominant masculine hegemony, narrating traditional masculine experiences of conquest, heroism and validation of strength. By contrast, the research found that the cruising world occupies a more ambiguous space, narrating the experience of cruising as though to steer clear of any gender specific imagery or discourse. It is through and because of this ambiguity that women participate in cruising yet because it is a neutral space they are not made visible. The research also suggests that the cruising yacht is an extension of the domestic space, bringing with all of the domestic dynamics found in the home. Thus, women partake of the cruising scene through their traditional association with the private sphere. In the world of yacht cruising, women comprise a significant part of the marketplace, exert control over the cruising scene and make important decisions regarding their equipment and activities. Yet, we conclude that marketing does not appear to be aware of these subtle dynamic and continues to steer clear of depicting women on yachts. Instead, the cruising space is sanitized so as not to depict gender and thus women. Ironically, though, marketers who actually identify the financial and decision-making power women possess in the cruising scene and develop a marketing strategy accordingly would engage a fresh consumer base.

INTRODUCTION
Marketing strategy is often governed by visible consumer bases and identifiable trends. This research encourages marketing to “look in the spaces” as much as focusing on the immediately obvious consumer base. Using the case study of women in sailing and their comparatively marginal status in the community by comparison with men, this research visits the feminist concept of the Other, originating with De Beauvoir (1949), and focuses on the ways in which this positionality plays out in the sailing context. The postmodern feminist approach is yet to gain momentum in marketing where the situation of the feminine as the Other has yet to be applied to consumption habits. This paper seeks to introduce the notion of the Other through a postmodern feminist lens and show how it may apply in a consumption context.

THE FEMINIST OTHER IN THE CONTEMPORARY CONSUMER WORLD—A REVIEW
Postmodern feminism essentially asserts that gender, sex roles and many other social roles are little more than performances or representations of a mythical social order. The concept of the Other was created in De Beauvoir’s Le Deuxième Sexe (1949) to illustrate how Woman is only ever the lesser binary opposite of Man. However, postmodern feminism has appropriated this concept and used it to excavate alternate gender roles. Theorists such as Pellegrini, (1997) and Butler (1993), interrogate the existing constraints on gender performance and the typically restricted positioning of desire. Their work emphasizes the perceived limits of sexual discourse:

‘Sex’ is always produced as a reiteration of hegemonic norms. This productive reiteration can be read as a kind of performativity. Discursive performativity appears to produce that which it names, to enact its own referent, to name and to make (Butler, 1993, 107).

The acknowledgement of gender as a performance leads feminist critique away from classical second wave feminist objections to gender inequality (Faludi, 1991; Friedan, 1963; Greer, 1970), towards a more polymorphous critique of the social order as a whole. This is not to say that postmodern feminism does not still view feminism as essentially a struggle against patriarchal norms. Indeed, this continues to be the case. But as Moi (1986) points out, this struggle now takes place in a different discursive terrain:

I start from an agonistic definition of feminism, which I see as the struggle against all forms of patriarchal and sexist oppression. . . a struggle which has often been seen simply as the effort to make women become like men. But the struggle for equal rights historically and politically commits feminists to emphasize the value of women as they are (i.e. before equal rights have been won). . . But given women’s lack of equal rights, this value must be located as difference, not as equality: women are of equal value in their own way. . .(1986, 6).

The effect of this position has been to construct feminism as a “third space” (Kristeva, 1979) or as a discourse of difference where the “feminine” is metaphorically constructed as a social representation of the Other:

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Postmodern-feminist theory would dispense with the idea of a subject of history. It would replace unitary notions of woman and feminine gender identity with plural and complexly constructed conceptualizations of social identity, treating gender as one relevant strand among others, attending also to class, race, ethnicity, age and sexual orientation (Nicholson, 1990, 34-5).

This deconstructive effect on traditional binary oppositions has typically been articulated through a Derridean model (1976, 1981a, b), where feminism, through its deconstructing practices, has attempted to erode such binaries and narrate a heterogeneous program of alternate representation—the Other. While certain critics of this representational project caution against feminism losing its agency as a specifically female cause (Owens in Foster, 1983, 62), the encompassing agenda of postmodern feminism has nonetheless expanded and diversified the scope for representation or as Owens suggests “the existence of feminism, with its insistence on difference, forces us to reconsider” (in Foster 1983, 77). The potential application for an alternate lens has also been acknowledged in marketing (Bristor & Fischer, 1993; Hirschmann, 1993) although this possibility is yet to be fully integrated.

METHOD

Data was collected from chat room, publication, yacht club and product sources. We conducted informal interviews with racing and cruising member with an even gender split among informants. The three dominant steps were classification, internal semiotic mining of text for themes (Barthes, 1977) and then a comparative intertextual triangulation (Boje, 2001) across all sources (interview data, chat rooms, forums, product catalogues, event advertising, newsletters, magazines etc.) for consistency. The second tier of analysis involved constructing a semiotic map to show how the data converged into a stable series of discourses. The intertextual analysis enabled us to compare across sources in order to understand how these discourses are disseminated within the sailing subculture. Finally, these readings of the data were integrated with other non-subcultural sources in order historically contextualize the discourses expressed in the subcultural narrative.

DATA ANALYSIS–WOMEN IN SAILING

The data table (1) illuminates the themes that emerged from the data regarding the status of women in sailing. It captures the key discourses that surround the history of women which affect their role in the sailing community and the perpetuation of those discourses in the sailing community. The first questions to be asked of women and the expression of femininity in the sailing discourse focus on the visibility and performativity of femininity itself. That is to ask: where do women appear in sailing? Or how do they appear? The role of women and the expression of femininity must take a different route and borrow from a different heritage from that of masculinity. This begs the question: can women partake and if so in what capacity?

Women in racing

The sailing community is composed of those who race and those who cruise. Racing is male dominated and visible barriers exist for women to participate. Female presence in the racing world is negligible by comparison with men and they cannot partake of the dynamic social interaction that emerges from the collective experience of masculine conquest. Crawley (1998) identifies the tactics employed by men to exclude women and the discursive tropes by which these tactics are communicated:

The participation of the women’s team in the 1995 America’s Cup is a particularly instructive case study of how both the social construction of sport and perceptions about female athletes impede women’s entrance into top-level competition. Media accounts of the team used stereotypical and infantilizing representations of women; male competitors tossed around accusations of lesbianism; and journalists constantly questioned women’s physical abilities (1998, 35).

The two dominant strains of critique, according to Crawley, rested firstly on the notion that women’s general physical abilities were deemed inferior and secondly that they were incapable, due to lack of upper-body strength, of grinding onto winches (1998, 34). These two criticisms of the women’s crew were surreptitiously circumvented and articulated through various channels such as sexuality and psychological intimidation. Physical inferiority and a problematic formulation of femininity impact on the status of women in sailing generally and form central tropes in the subculture’s discourse.

FEMININE PHYSICAL INFERIORITY, THE STRONG WOMAN AS “LESBIAN” AND THE RE-ENACTMENT OF TRADITIONAL GENDER STEREOTYPES

As Crawley points out, the critique of physical strength as a problem has potentially inhibited women from maximizing their strength. The question of physical strength is also linked to sexuality where to be physically strong is to be analogically read as a lesbian (Harry, 1995). The allegation of being a lesbian is of course socially inscribed as negative. Thus, by introducing the notion that to be strong was to be a lesbian placed an obstacle in the way of the female crew—they were confronted with either being competitive and suffer being labeled or fail to compete and retain their perceived femininity. Media coverage of the 1995 America’s Cup women’s crew constantly probed their sexuality, leading one crew member to clarify each of her team member’s marital status (Hornblower, 1995, 67). Famed skipper Dennis Conner directly referred to the crew as a “bunch of lesbians” (Hornblower, 1995, 67) and the question among journalists of whether the women would hold up against the men persisted throughout the regatta.

Willis describes the paradox faced by women even more eloquently in suggesting that:

so again as an athlete can be to fail as a woman, because she has, in certain profound symbolic ways, become a man (1982, 36).

In traditional sports such as sailing and ball sports, women face particularly harsh critique. Cox and Thompson’s study (2000) of female soccer players revealed a heightened awareness of performing femininity so as not to appear masculine. Any identification as masculine inevitably resulted in being defined as a lesbian. As a result, players felt the need to express their femininity in constructed ways so as to unambiguously articulate and “perform” their gender in the face of their sport identity. The authors conclude that:

women who use their bodies to play sport, an institution largely constructed and dominated by men, often experience contradictions, ambiguities and conflicts. Many of these experiences will be associated with having transgressed normative gender boundaries, while at the same time being involved in the conservative practices surrounding traditionally male sport (2000, 18).
Bricknell’s study of gender in sailing revealed an even more conservative construction in the sailing community. Cox and Thompson’s work on soccer players revealed sensitivity to gender norms, but also their willingness to carve out an identity outside of gender expectations. Bricknell’s work (1999) demonstrated the complication surrounding gender relations in sailing and the potential consequences of appearing too feminine in the racing world. In the face of a dominant masculinity, women are inevitably perceived as “too masculine”, and therefore lesbian or they are to be treated as inferior, weak and malleable. The perception that women only appeared in team uniform because they had slept with a crew member freely circulated at regattas. Sailing on a different boat and having a team shirt that differed from one’s life partner was also a problem since it reflected a potential infidelity. Likewise, non-sailing female partners of male crew were suspicious of other women who crewed with their male life partners. Unless defined as lesbian, the presence of women caused problems in the racing context.

Female interview participants commented on their racing activities in light of the gender boundaries that exist:

Jane: I think the only way that you get accepted as a woman on a boat is when you are either brilliant at it or if you are one of those old girls who’s married to some skipper whose been...
around the club for decades. I don’t let it stop me enjoying sailing because I love it so much. But, yeah, I’m always aware that I am not one of the boys and I never will be.

Other women interviewed shed additional light on their status as a racing sailor and the problems that it posed for them:

Mary: I hate the whole bloke thing in sailing. It’s a load of crap. All it means is that they get to get pissed, hit on women and then say “it’s because we’re better.” You only sail as a woman if you are totally committed because it’s not like you will get any help socially. It’s a pain in the arse, frankly.

This kind of scrutiny and poor treatment occurs at every level of sailing. While the women interviewed above speak about their local yacht club experience, the malignment of women also occurs at an international level.

The image of Olympic sailor Katherine Hopson (Seahorse Magazine, Sept., 2004, 11) (Figure 1) is one of many produced for a fund-raising calendar. The fact that she, like her male team mates, posed nude is not at issue. The problem resides in the caption below which deems her a “better choice for most Seahorse readers”. Her feminine body reduces Hopson to mere visual entertainment. Her commitment to the plight of her team and their fund raising efforts is eroded by her representation as provocative fun—unlike her male team mates. Thus, it is clear that in team-oriented elite sailing, women also struggle to participate on an equal plane.

 Indeed, women are frequently represented in the subcultural discourse as visual entertainment. The website reportage here illuminates the extent to which women are regarded as sexual props:

Thierry bought us a few beers, and we dropped our protest after a discussion at the tent that was marked by each of us nodding off in mid-sentence—we were so tired. We were so tired, in fact, that we didn’t even make it to last night’s free beer/beach volleyball tournament, but I’ll see how it went. The Comex Paint girls that were running it were wearing the smallest, tightest, shiniest blue shorts you’ve ever seen, and they were probably all 18 years old. I really wanted to go, but we ended up eating a home-cooked goose (thanks Roy) and passing out hard instead (Mr. Clean-Sailing Anarchy March 2007)

This desire for the combination of beer, food and women is also articulated in Bricknell’s study where the male inability to sustain a meaningful relationship with a woman in the sailing context has an equally damaging effect on the status of women generally in the community. Regattas are not complete unless there are women to chase—not race. This image of women as on-shore entertainment precludes them from being perceived as serious sailors or worthy of any serious respect.

 Temple suggests that:

Women who succeed in the masculine world of skippering racing yachts and ocean liners or single-handed ocean sailing are great role models for women who are exploring careers and leisure activities using male-stereotyped skills and technologies (1996, 23).

One might conclude, however, that the road for women in racing at every level is thwarted by a discourse that classifies them as undesirable—except as on-shore entertainment. Gender plays a central role in limiting the space of participation and sets stringent rules surrounding how gender operates in the sailing community space. Sailing, and in particular racing, is acknowledged as an expressly male domain where the success of women is perceived as a strange and undesirable usurpation of a masculine activity.

**Women and the cruising community—a gender neutral space**

The cruising community works with a different set of values and derives a different experience from their sailing. The emphasis in the cruising community is upon enjoyment, relaxation and time spent traveling to various destinations. It is not competitive; rather it is an opportunity for friends and families to see the world.

An analysis of the following *Cruising Helmsman* covers offers insight into the world of cruising. The covers come as a stark comparison with the images depicted on racing magazines. Most
significantly, this cruising magazine employs gender neutral language, except in its title which still assumes a prevalence of male participation. The cover remains neutral, choosing to depict the yacht rather than people. Indeed, many of the Cruising Helmsman covers, among other cruising magazines frequently show boats and destinations rather than people. Unlike the visibly inscribed images of men at work shown on racing magazine covers, this cover does not depict anyone, leaving instead a blank space. This gender void speaks volumes of the Other through its failure to depict anyone. It is this neutral space, the space of the Other, into which women slip in order to participate. Racing imagery is embedded in masculine hegemony, narrating traditional masculine experiences of conquest, heroism and validation of strength. By contrast, the cruising world occupies a more ambiguous space, narrating the experience of cruising as though to steer clear of any gender specific imagery or discourse. It is through and because of this ambiguity that women participate in cruising yet, because it is a neutral space, they are not made visible (Figure 2).

The first aspect (January 2003) of the cover to strike the reader is the tranquility and beauty of the image. Gone are the images of men at war with the ocean. Instead, the reader is seduced into daydreaming of clear waters, blue skies and a relaxing sojourn on a river. The boat, although large, is dwarfed by the beauty and vastness of the surrounds symbolically capturing the essence of cruising as one where the destination is the most important thing. Nature, then, becomes an ally, a wonder to behold and respect, not conquer. The reader also notes the difference in the boat itself. Cruising yachts are cumbersome, large and slow, but they are comfortable, fitted out and classic. The captions framing this captivating image also begin to tell the cruising story. The dominant caption “geared for disaster” cautions, via the trope of a cruiser’s tale, against taking risk or heading into danger and ruining the experience of cruising. It is assumed that cruisers do not look for risky adventure with family and friends on board but instead look to the next lovely destination. The caption “geared for disaster” is distinctive in its gender absence. The sub-caption “the day a cruiser just couldn’t stop” reveals the gender neutral space created by cruising and how certain cruising stories are narrated without gender distinction.

This desire is illuminated by the caption entitled “destinations—Myall Lakes, Eden, Gove”. Although these places are all well-worn cruising places, the publication represents the notion that the cruising community never tires of a beautiful place. The location above further connects with the cruiser’s other great dilemma (other than where to go); what boat to buy. This caption is particularly insightful since the language used to speak to the direct is direct, personal and assumes a level of complicity on the behalf of the reader. The by-line “includes your essential 200 point checklist” emphasizes a personal connection with the reader, as though speaking directly to them about their own personal needs and desires. This use of personalized language also serves to reaffirm a strong sense of community where everyone feels as though the interests of the individual are shared by the community. This is further re-iterated in the subsequent caption “how to beat the bilge pump blues—do’s and don’t of installation” where it is assumed that everyone has suffered similar frustrations over their bilge pump. This caption also points to another strain commonly found in cruising literature—the DIY cruising yachtsperson. Much of the content in cruising magazines focuses on self-maintenance of boats. This personal affinity with the boat, where a sense of pride is derived from building, repairing and maintaining the boat oneself, is an integral aspect of the cruising community’s discourse.
The cruising space as extension of the domestic sphere

The cruising life and the cruising yacht space itself are both extensions of the traditional domestic space and therefore re-affirm many of the same gender roles practiced in the home. The prevalent demographic who live a cruising lifestyle are couples who either use their yacht as an escape to nature or live on it permanently. This intimate dynamic (which is absent from the racing scene) means that women must contribute to the activity and participate in the sailing or maintenance because there is no other crew upon whom to rely. But, in many respects, women are subject to the same gender restrictions experienced in other parts of the sailing community and appear to remain subordinate to their male skipper. They do, at least, benefit from the ability to travel and experience adventure. To this extent, the cruising experience offers women a mediated enjoyment of sailing.

The traditional positioning of women as active in the private sphere has a long and established intellectual and social history born through the pens of philosophers such as Rousseau (La nouvelle Héloïse, 1761) and Montesquieu (Lettres persanes, 1721). The advent of the bourgeois family unit concept, which grew out of Enlightenment principles of reason, social unity and the primacy of man as the patriarch of his reality and thus family, definitively situated women in a domestic role (Wollstonecraft, 1999). Fox-Genovese describes the Enlightenment view of women as:

informed by all the cultural and social tensions of the eighteenth-century. Although it glorified women as mothers, wives, daughters, custodians of the domestic sphere, it did not necessarily reflect men’s easy acceptance of women’s own powers and perceptions (in Bridenthal, Koonz & Stuard, 1987: 269).

The rules, structures and role assignments that occur in the home recur in the cruising space. The community upon which families calls for assistance, advice and guidance in a traditional neighborhood also exists in the cruising community where all matters are discussed and solutions are found. This replication of the traditional domestic space is the avenue by which women enter the discursive terrain and exert presence within the community.

In the home, women often maintain the domestic space, exercising influence over organization, finances and family comfort. This dynamic is repeated on the cruising yacht. It is not suggested here that the cruising space offers women any kind of liberation from gender restriction in sailing. Rather, they participate in a particular context which affords them a certain kind of presence or influence. For instance, in his account of re-building the interior of his yacht, this skipper narrates the authority held by his wife:

Anne is singularly unimpressed with the galley and the aft cabin. Even I, who knew virtually nothing about cooking, could see many shortcomings in the galley. “Thus must have been designed by a man” Anne snorted as she surveyed the unpromising scene (Cruising Helmsman, July 2005, 34).

Anne is situated in the narrative as the matriarch who orders the use of space in the boat. Her critique of the galley makes visible the mode of feminine presence where, in the cruising space as in the home, her approval is important. The worth attributed to domestic duties is augmented on the boat since a paucity of space and the ability to perform duties on a moving vessel make the ability to perform domestic roles even more valuable. That being said, Anne’s role is domestically oriented. She considers the cooking and cleaning of the boat since they are her ascribed roles. There is no question that, while there is a woman on board, the male will do the cooking or other domestic duties. This narrative captures the vexed situation for women in sailing. On the one hand, women perform necessary roles and contribute a skill base. On the other hand, their contribution is not aligned with or valued as much as sailing skills which fall to a male domain. The female role is mediated via a male presence.

Interviews with cruising women revealed different feelings towards their role on board. Some women felt a sense of liberation simply at being on the water and did not dwell on the ways in which their participation was limited or marked by their gender:

Gail: [laughing] Oh, I never do the full-on boat things like set sails or go up the mast. It would need to be a real emergency before [husband] let me do that. I don’t really even helm all that often. But, I love it you know. We have been all around the South Pacific and I have seen some of the most incredible things that other people just don’t get to see and I do it all from my own boat. I basically run the boat, keep it clean and on the sailing side I step in for navigation, coastguard contact, that sort of thing.

Gail is aware of her secondary role on the boat but feels that the excitement of cruising around the world is compensation enough. She is aware that her role is defined by what her husband will “let” her do rather than what she would like to do. She balances her domestic role with more sail skill tasks such as navigation so that she enjoys a sense of being able to sail as well as keep house.

Other informants were more aware of their domestic role and found it a source of frustration:

Jenny: I spend all my time below, cooking, cooking, cooking. Men are always hungry when they sail. To be totally honest, I get a bit sick of just being downstairs while the men get to sail. I can do that at home.

Jenny’s remarks clearly reflect her sense of limitation and she directly aligns her experience as a sailor with her life at home. Finally, some other comments reveal a different perspective again.

The acknowledgement of the cruising yacht as a domestic space for women is illuminated by Judith in the following terms:

Judith: We have our roles, our duties and I don’t think that my role is any less than his. Anything top deck is his. Anything below is mine. I run the boat like my home and I don’t like to be uncomfortable. It defeats the point of sailing so he gets the boat going for me which I benefit from and then he comes below to a homey boat and he benefits from that.

This perspective resonates with chat room participants who see their role as domestic manager as an essential aspect of the cruising experience. Like Judith, chat room participants acknowledged that their roles were not sail oriented, but saw their duties as important. Chat room data revealed an emphasis on domestic roles among female chat participants who sought solutions among their colleagues. Thus, cruising opens the way to a feminized space, requiring traditionally feminine skills to sustain it. It is false to suggest that women possess dominant power in the cruising scene or that frequently their role is no more elaborate than a capable housewife. However, they are permitted to participate and reap certain personal benefits from cruising.

Final comments on women in sailing

Women do not possess the same general status in sailing as men and their participation is contingent upon men. Just as the role of men in sailing is embedded in an historical and cultural discourse
of conquest, women engage a complex historical and cultural discourse surrounding domesticity, responsibility and private organization to perform their role in sailing. The discourses based on gender have significant impact on the social formulation of the community and clear gender regimes, to echo Bricknell, are maintained at all times. Men and women appear acutely aware of gender as an organizing discourse in their community. Among the racing men of the sport, women are problematic. They represent uncertainty, clouded emotions and physical weakness. All of these characteristics signify the antithesis of the ideal racing temperament. This fear of feminine participation in racing appears to manifest in frequent derision of women, situating them as sexual objects, inferior racers, bar dwellers and general entertainment. While there are exceptions to this rule which can be found at many yacht clubs, this characterization of women can be said to represent a general perspective in the racing scene.

That being said, women benefit from sailing, albeit in a more restricted context. As the data analysis reflects, women feel their own sense of achievement through sailing. They make their own social connections, particularly in the cruising community, and enjoy the elements of freedom and travel on the water. The cruising community better accommodates women’s participation through its gender neutral discourse. This does not give women the credit they deserve since their skills and abilities are frequently subordinated to their male skipper and they are not represented adequately in cruising depictions. However, as the data showed, many women appeared pleased just to be on the water and with their families.

**CONCLUSIONS FOR MARKETING**

Women in sailing play out the status of the Other as envisaged by De Beauvoir. The cruising yacht is an extension of the family home, bringing to it the historically embedded cultural narratives that locate women at the helm of the domestic sphere. Marketers in sailing do not appear cognizant of this real world dynamic and continue to “steer clear” of depicting women on yachts or marketing directly to them. Instead, the cruising space is sanitized as though frightened to reveal its participants for fear that women might appear. Ironically, though, any marketer who identified the financial and decision-making influence women exert in cruising and developed a marketing strategy accordingly would benefit substantially. To identify and capitalize upon a subtle theme like this requires a nuanced understanding of the social dynamic of the subculture. It requires marketing to plunge into the de-limited, unknown space encapsulated in the term “Other” and seek out the invisible consumers who are buried within the particular culture. Thus it is hoped that research such as this paves the way for marketing to go in search of the consumer as Other.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Issues surrounding gender, marketing and consumption have received increasing attention from the marketing academy over recent years (e.g. Hirschman, 1987, Wallendorf and Arnould, 1988, Costa, 2000). However, as Crocco et al (2006) note, there is scant interest within marketing and consumer research in studies focusing on the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual) segment generally and Rosenbaum (2005) comments that the literature concerning homosexual marketplace discrimination is sparse. Additionally, it is our observation that while there is some growth in the body of literature documenting research on gay men (e.g. Kates, 1998, 2000, Crocco et al., 2006) and on inclusive work which focuses on gay men and lesbians (e.g. Penaloza, 1996, Walters and Moore, 2002, Rosenbaum, 2005), our experience in developing this paper showed that there is a dearth of literature within marketing or consumer research focusing more specifically on lesbians (e.g. Oakenfull and Greenlee, 2004).

Our aim is to widen the debate into gender, marketing and consumption by exploring issues surrounding the construction (or ‘performativity’) of expressions of Butch lesbian identity through consumption and the careful management—and even suppression—of that identity in specific contexts and audiences (job interviews), particularly in relation to the politics of gender and sexuality in the workplace. We examine ways in which Butch lesbians manage and negotiate their identity in a world where the cultural gender belief system makes assumptions about masculinity and femininity and attitudes towards appropriate roles for the sexes (Deaux and Kite, 1987, in Whitley, 2001).

This paper explores the way in which Butch lesbians use clothing to shape self and create identity in line with “the meanings that serve to define (consumers’) current sense of self and the type of envisioned identities that they seek to realise through consumption activities” (Thompson, 1997, p.447) and the “deep meanings” of consumption (Belk, Sherry and Wallendorf, 1988); the consumer’s ability “to build a DIY self through consumption” (Elliott, 1997). Using personal accounts, message board responses and interactions, we explore the conflict between the desire to remain true to an authentic expression of self and the underlying fear that true self representation will invite rejection or discrimination.

Our attention was first drawn towards studying Butch identity in relation to the workplace environment by discussion threads arising from time to time within online lesbian community message boards (which both authors are members of) on the topic of what to wear for interviews and whether there is too much risk associated with being openly Butch in that particular context. It was one of these threads—entitled “My Interview Dilemma”-which provided us with the motivation and inspiration to conduct this research and examine some of the underlying issues in depth and the kind of reactions respondents received or have experienced. This gave rise to two main issues of importance in the development of this paper, namely the idea for the topic under consideration and also an in-depth, reflexive examination of the nature of online inquiry (cyber ethnography or online ethnography). We have dealt with these two areas by presenting a review of the literature on consumption and self, queer identity, Butch identity and sexual identity in the workplace together with a detailed methodological discussion of online enquiry and the role of the ‘embedded’ researcher underpinning our exploration of lesbians’ experiences of performing their Butch identity through symbolic consumption. We contend that this paper offers dual contributions to knowledge in terms of both increased understanding of (Butch) identity and the construction and negotiation of self through symbolic consumption and the discourse surrounding methodology and reflexivity in the context of emergent online community scenes of enquiry.

The research presented in this paper shows that the notion of Butch identity has both psychological roots and is performed as a situated social practice but while it may be seen as social competence within a particular community of practice—the lesbian community—its management and enactment outside that community can present challenges and risks for the individual. Identity is thus not an object “but a constant being” and one which can be tempered and negotiated as Butch lesbians move between a variety of social communities with multi-membership across family, work and culture. The analysis presented in this paper has highlighted various aspects of Butch identity and sexual politics which clearly merit further cross-disciplinary investigation.

References


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Conventional wisdom suggests that hungry people buy more products; also, people buy more French wine when French music is played in the supermarket (North et al. 1997); body feedbacks, like arm flexion, influence consumers’ evaluation of products (Foster, 2004); and, casual interpersonal touch increases patrons amount of tipping (Lynn & Grassman, 1990). Contextual influences are becoming an increasingly important area of inquiry in marketing research. Recent notable examples include mood effects on consumers’ behavior showing that people in positive mood evaluate products more favorably than people in a negative mood (Gardner, 2000); also, mood was shown to have strong influence on consumers use of time (Hornik, 1982); and very recent observation that “feeling right” influences consumers’ cognitive and affective reactions (Avnet & Higgins, 2006).

As researchers attempt to understand how consumers behave and make decisions, the study of momentary and temporal moderating influences is becoming more varied. For example, the amount of time between stimuli and the time of the day in which they are ingested influences is becoming more varied. The study of the diurnal variation of consumer behavior should be of interest of marketing researchers, especially for the possible managerial considerations regarding the scheduling of various activities, like, in store activities, the timing of advertising campaign or the experimental and testing environment of marketing research. Since behavior occurs within the context of varied sets of circumstances, one may assume that these circumstances are an important source of variations in consumer response and therefore, deserve also more theoretical attention.

Hence, the purpose of the paper is two fold: first to bring the attention of the marketing research community to the theoretical and practical aspects of one of the most important biological rhythm expressed by individuals’ diurnal preferences. Second, to use an ongoing marketing research project, on consumers’ time perception and behavior, to illustrate how individuals’ behavioral and perceptual differences might be a result of their diurnal preferences. The paper develops an initial exploration of this subject in marketing by presenting some major theoretical considerations linking circadian rhythm to consumer behavior. Afterward, a brief review of the essential concepts and models of time behavior and perception, that are relevant to our investigation is provided. Then the article extends a recent pilot study and introduces two experimental studies designed to examine the influence of time-of-day (TOD) on common consumers situations, consumers’ perception and evaluation of tasks duration. The intention of the first study is to investigate the influence of circadian types on time behavior and perception of the following activity: completion of a short marketing questionnaire administered online. Results show that At both times of day the Mt and Et types tended to underestimate the morning and evening sessions, during their peak times, respectively.

The major objective of Study 2 is to assess the magnitude of the measures to a different and much longer task: internet time. Results show a clear tendency of all three groups to underestimate this relative long task. Second, the results confirmed our predictions of smaller time estimates and higher search behavior for the Mt and Et types at their respective optimal compared to non optimal TOD.

The meanings of the results are clear: a consumer’s response is highly dependent on time of measurement and exposure. Synchrony effects seem to influence customer behavior controlling thoughts and actions. It appears, therefore, that TOD effects on task performance are far more complex and time specific than previously acknowledged (Feldman & Hornik, 1981).

Next, by drawing on the research results, theoretical and practical implications for marketing research are presented. Finally, further investigations into the role of TOD on consumer behavior and new avenues for marketing research are suggested.
Motivational Influences in Time Discounting: The Effect of Regulatory Focus
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Consumers often need to allocate resources to satisfy their present needs and those of the future. Choices in those situations are often driven by personal discount rate, the extent to which one values the future relative to the present. In this research, we examine the influence of regulatory focus on discount rates for hypothetical monetary gains and losses.

Regulatory Focus and Time Discounting

Regulatory focus theory (Higgins 1998, Pham and Higgins 2005) distinguishes two mechanisms of self-regulation: promotion and prevention, which differ in terms of desired end states and preferred means of attaining one’s desired end states. Prior research shows that promotion focus is more sensitive to the presence and magnitude of gains whereas prevention focus induces greater sensitivity to those of losses. The finding of differential hedonic sensitivity has two implications for time discounting. First, the differential sensitivity to gains and losses suggests differences in the shape of the value function: in the gain domain, the value function should be steeper for promotion (vs. prevention) focus, whereas prevention focus is associated with steeper value function (i.e., greater loss aversion) in the loss domain. Researchers have argued that steeper value function is generally associated with higher discount rates (e.g., Loewenstein and Prelec 1992). Thus, we expect lower discount rate for promotion focus (vs. prevention focus) in the gain domain and the reverse in the loss domain.

Another implication of the differential hedonic sensitivity to gains and losses relates to the role of anticipation. Savoring from a future positive event leads to a desire to delay the event (i.e., lower discount rate) whereas dread from a future negative event leads to a desire to expedite the event (i.e., lower discount rate). Given their differential sensitivity to gains and losses, promotion-focused individuals (vs. prevention-focused ones) will experience greater savoring from future gains and hence exhibit lower discount rates. In contrast, future losses will induce more dread for prevention-focused individuals, leading to lower discount rates. Furthermore, promotion-focused individuals may assign greater weight to savoring because they perceive savoring as more diagnostic for making decisions (the same logic applies to dread for prevention-focused individuals).

In addition, prior research has shown that promotion focus, relative to prevention focus, is associated with a stronger preference to postpone goal pursuit because the activation of maximal goals under promotion focus encourages a more exhaustive search for alternative strategies prior to goal pursuit (e.g., Pennington and Roese 2003). This may be suggestive of a general preference for delay in intertemporal tradeoffs. This also predicts lower discount rates under promotion (vs. prevention) focus for gains but higher discount rates for losses.

In sum, drawing on research in regulatory focus, we expect a lower discount rate for promotion focus than for prevention focus when the tradeoff involves two future gains. However, when two future losses are involved, we expect the reverse to hold true. This prediction was tested in three laboratory experiments.

Empirical Tests

In study 1 (N=58), we measured discount rates through a matching procedure, and then after a 30-minute delay measured participants’ chronic promotion and prevention strengths. We then regressed discount rates on chronic promotion and prevention strengths for gains and losses separately. As predicted, chronic promotion strength significantly reduced discount rates in the gain domain (promotion strength had no effect), but in the loss domain, prevention strength significantly lowered discount rates (promotion strength had no effect). These results provided preliminary support for our hypothesis. However, they could not establish causality. To address this issue, we manipulated regulatory focus in study 2.

In study 2 (N=52), we measured discount rates through the same matching procedure as in study 1, but manipulated participants’ situational strengths for promotion and prevention via a priming procedure (Lockwood, Jordon, and Kunda 2002). Our hypothesis was supported. Discount rates were significantly lower for promotion-primed participants than for prevention-primed ones for future gains. In contrast, for future losses, promotion-primed participants indicated higher discount rates than their prevention-primed counterparts.

In study 3 (N=88), instead of the matching procedure, we measured discount rates through choices in more familiar tasks (annuity payment for gains and loan repayment for losses). The goal is to test the robustness and generalizability of the findings from the previous two studies. In addition, we included a control group who were not primed with either promotion or prevention focus. Consistent with our prediction, promotion-primed participants indicated significantly lower discount rates for gains than prevention-primed participants or those in the control group. Conversely, for losses, the prevention group showed lower discount rates than promotion or control groups.

General Discussion

The present research contributes to the behavioral research on time discounting by highlighting the importance of motivational influences, which has been largely neglected in the existing research. Our results suggest that motivational factors matter and should be incorporated into theories of time discounting. Moreover, our research contributes to the growing interest in individual differences in decision making and judgmental biases (e.g., Stanovich and West 1998). To marketing practitioners, our results suggest a new way of market segmentation for marketers of intertemporal goods (products and services that involve intertemporal tradeoffs, e.g., appliances, credit cards, etc.). To this end, identifying observable markers of market segments with different regulatory foci may be a fruitful avenue for future research. Second, marketers of different intertemporal goods may also want to employ different marketing mixes in accordance with their specific products since products themselves may activate or prime different regulatory focus (Zhou and Pham 2004).

Future research may examine more closely the underlying causes of the effects reported here by directly measuring or manipu-
lating the mediating constructs (e.g., anticipation). Moreover, the present research relies on responses to hypothetical questions. Therefore, future research should aim to determine the robustness and size of the effect in field settings.

References


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

A major contribution of behavioral decision research has been to establish the notion of uncertain preferences, the idea that consumer preferences are not well defined but rather constructed in the process of making a choice. This constructive viewpoint suggests that people’s preferences for an alternative can be influenced by the composition of the choice set of which that alternative is part. In particular, compromise effect, which predicts that brands can gain share when they become intermediate options in the choice set, is one of the most important and strong effect documented in behavioral decision research: compromise effect systematically affects choice under different conditions (Chernev 2004; Dhar and Simonson 2003; Novemsky and et al. 2004; Nowlis and Simonson 2000; Sheng, Parker, and Nakamoto 2005; Simonson 1989).

Notwithstanding, consumer research literature mainly focused on the static nature of the compromise effect without considering how time varying factors may influence decision rules and the composition of choice set. Several factors can influence the composition of choice set and those factors could be the outcome of diffusion effect or the result of firms’ conduct: the increasing availability of information over time, the increasing familiarity with product category and the arrival of a new brand in a market might affect the consumers’ preference formation process and might determine a modification of the context within which choices are made. A pioneer brand could be negatively or positively affected by the arrival of a new alternative when this turns it into an extreme or a compromise alternative.

Our work intends to examine the interaction between order of entry and compromise effect, to understand how the position that the pioneer occupies into the choice set, after the arrival of followers, can change the intensity of the advantage gained.

While studying compromise effect in a dynamic context it is important to take into consideration the evolution of consumers’ preferences and the increasing in their knowledge about product categories. Familiarity with product categories could influence the relationship between compromise and order of entry effects: we aim to understand if highly familiar consumers are affected more by the compromise heuristic or by the information on pioneering status.

We conducted an experiment made of a two part task, so that each participant was reached twice. Participants in the experiment were 165 students at a major European University and the experiment is a 2 (set size: two vs. three product alternatives) X 3 (information on the pioneer: extreme alternative as the pioneer vs. compromise alternative as pioneer vs. no information on the order of market entry) factorial design. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the experimental conditions. With a time lag of five days participants were asked twice to carry out the same task.

The sample was divided in three groups to control for factors external to the experiment. Group 1 examined the case in which the extreme alternative A is the pioneer, while Group 2 examined the case in which the middle alternative B is the pioneer. Group 3 served as control group and participants were provided with no information on the order of entry.

Our results show the presence of compromise effect in the absence of information about order of entry and different pattern of choice in presence of such information.
Calendar Girls and Bodybuilders. Is Activism a Brand Strategy?
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ABSTRACT
As more companies engage with social responsibility and align with political causes it is timely to consider the implications of activism as a brand strategy. Two kinds of women’s activism about body representation are used to examine the implications of social activism for a brand. Women’s political body activism has a long history and research has established women’s magazines as an important site of cultural discourses on femininity. A deconstructive approach is used to reveal the existence of resistance, compliance and subversion in women’s body activism. A theoretical construct is introduced to explain the emergent contradictions and expose the riskiness this kind of activism poses as a brand strategy.

INTRODUCTION
Recently a brand has taken on women’s body activism as a strategy and, using a cultural level of analysis, this paper explores women’s body activism and considers the implications for a brand from the viewpoint of a specific social theory. Scott (2005) decried feminist attitudes to women’s dress and appearance over the years, rightly pointing out that some second wave feminists had a restrictive uniform of dungarees and short hair. Activism, political and social, is often writ large on bodies through selected clothes styles, haircuts and makeup such as the gay activist movement. In spite of claims of postfeminism, there continue to be struggles over the meaning of femininity and the construction of gender, which are played out in the cultural sphere. For women control over their bodies and appearance has long been a site of political activity, for example protests at the Miss World beauty competitions, burning bras, and wearing trousers. It continues today through beauty products taken into Afghanistan, for some wearing the veil is political as well as religious (Bouma and Brace-Govan 2000) and protests against ‘Heroin chic’, or the super skinny, and often very young, models on catwalks. A response to this last issue came from Dove in 2004 when the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty was launched. Based on research results that significant percentages of 4,100 women across 13 countries understood being physically attractive was valued but also thought the media could do better at portraying the diversity of women. Between 62% and 81% of women in the survey believed the media set unrealistic standards of beauty that most women cannot achieve (Dove 2004).

In the last two years the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty has taken off around the world with websites, education programs and ‘Self-Esteem Funds’ that finance social interventions as well as billboards, TV ads and more. The Dove campaign has caused debate amongst marketers as a result of its success in “getting attention” (Stevenson 2005) and amongst feminists because of their long running interest in the representation of women. In January 2006 the Dove campaign arrived in Australia with the launch of a calendar attached to the Madison fashion magazine for that month. The calendar used pictures of ‘real’ or ‘natural’ women. Interestingly, the Australian ‘Self-esteem Fund’ seminar series on body image and self-worth not only has two other sponsors but has also been directed at boys and girls with a disclaiming paragraph that clearly states the workshops are not for commercial promotion or profit. In other countries the workshops have been directed at girls only and the Dove sponsorship has been proudly acknowledged. This paper addresses the question of social activism for women’s bodies at the level of culture by using an analysis of two articles from the same issue of a women’s magazine that claims to speak to the postfeminist woman. After considering two kinds of body activism for women, the question asked from a social theory perspective is, can a brand take on social activist dimensions in this arena?

WOMEN’S POLITICAL BODY ACTIVISM
In some respects the question is already answered for women’s body activism in the affirmative because a history of women’s fashion and body representations shows several shifts over time from the athletic Gibson Girl of the 1890s, the flapper of the 1920s, the hourglass shape of the 1950s to the skinny Twiggy of 1960s then the athletic, toned body of the 1980s aerobics queens like Jane Fonda (Englis, Solomon and Ashmore 1994; Scott 2005). The roots of women’s political activity over their right to particular dress, appearance and activities have quite a history (Scott 2005), as does the feminist commentary on this (Davis 1997). The rational dress movement that began in the late 19th century and continued into the 20th century was part of several sources of political and social activism by women including the campaign for votes, access to education and access to physical activity. Women activists fought for freedom from corsets, entrance to university and the right to ride a bicycle. Access to physical activity was in fact a political victory upper class women achieved less than a century ago. At that time, bodies were a zone of civic duty (Davis 1997) and being healthy was a permitted part of good character that enhanced the potential for healthy children (Davis 1997). Through the middle of the 20th century there was a shift in focus and body maintenance for self-esteem became a ‘work zone’ that demonstrated our self-discipline and social value (Featherstone 1982). Key in this change were the close links with the fashion and cosmetic industries that encouraged women in particular to work towards desirability (Davis 1997). Now closely linked to worth as a person, body maintenance is firmly established as a virtuous leisure time activity which will reap further lifestyle rewards resulting from an enhanced appearance (Featherstone 1982, 25).

The link between physical activity and the favorable presentation of self was not limited to women of course, but there was, and still is, a different relationship between physical activity and men (Connell 2000), and the differences were the focus of much scholarly attention through the 1990s (Davis 1997). Underlying these debates is the social construction of gender and the social meanings, and social power, that reside in representations of the body (Patterson and Elliott 2002). But are there repercussions for social activism in brands, such as Dove? A comparison of the article about the launch of the Dove Calendar in Madison January 2006 is made with a feature article in the same magazine issue on women’s bodybuilding to draw out some pertinent points that need to be considered when an assessment of social activism by brands is made.

WOMEN’S MAGAZINES AS A LOCUS OF MEANING
The significance of advertising and women’s fashion magazines as a locus of cultural meanings and socialization of women is well established (Englis al 1994; Kates and Shaw-Garlock 1999; Patterson and Elliott 2002). Several social forces converge in this space including the disciplinary gaze (Foucault 1980) and discourses of femininity (Thompson and Hirschman 1995; Thompson 2006).
and Haytko 1997) to generate a site of cultural performance where strategies of normalization and corporeal regulation can be engaged (Kates and Shaw-Garlock 1999; Patterson and Elliott 2002). The visual representation of culture is of great importance and “visual aspects of culture have come to dominate our understanding of identity” (Schröder 2004, 234). Furthermore, for women, fashion magazines have been shown to be a legitimate arena for the expression of desire and a locus of socialization (Budgeon and Currie 1995; Englis et al. 1994). In short, fashion magazines contribute to women’s understanding of their subjectivity and the performativity of their femininity, although this must be understood as negotiated by the reader (Kates and Shaw-Garlock 1999; Patterson and Elliott 2002).

DECONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH TO REVEAL MEANING

As Kates (1999) noted, the negotiation of meanings, culture and ideological representations in texts have multiple potential readings and discourse plays an important role in mediating interpretation. Language is not a neutral medium (Barthes 1977; Foucault 1977; Stern 1996), nor are visual representations (Patterson and Elliott 2002; Schröder 2004). Both words and pictures are texts that carry authorial discursive intent, but are open to “producerly” readings by the receiver. Moreover, the covert meanings can be revealed through a deconstruction of the text (Elliott 1996; Stern 1996). The interpretation available through a deconstructive analysis of discourse opens a space to discuss the influences present at the level of culture. This paper is not a discussion of the interpretation of individual members’ perceptions, nor is it a discussion of managerial and journalistic intent. Rather it is an exploration of the potentialities that reside within the text. As Stern (1996, 69) suggests, “deconstructive criticism is often provocative, for scratching at the surface of a culture opens raw spots ordinarily concealed from view.” However, she goes to say that a valued outcome is a “heightened understanding of the cultural network that binds advertising, consumers, and society”. The focus here is on two reports of body activism by women and the discussion is directed at the level of cultural discourse.

Madison is a magazine with an Australian readership of 338,000 as at September 2006, and targets women aged 25 to 39 with above average income whom the magazine describes as:

Ambitious, sexy and socially aware. The Madison woman actively enjoys her life. She loves fashion but will dress to suit a style she’s developed. She’s seriously interested in beauty but her health is just as important as finding the perfect lipgloss. Her world is rich and varied and she embraces all its aspects. Career? Baby? Partner? Everything is still possible. The Madison woman is a grown-up and wants to be treated like one. She doesn’t need her hand-held any more but still wants information, she prefers to form her own opinion. (ACP 2006)

The Madison woman is the epitome of the ‘postfeminist’ woman-aware, self-reliant and experimental (Davis 1995). The two articles were selected for analysis because they address two types of current women’s body activism, which the magazine conveys through a combination of text and pictures. One feature article reports on women competing in a Natural Bodybuilding Award. Bodybuilding women choose to alter their appearance, not through adornment and dress but through their bodies within a specific, and recognizable discourse of bodywork which is often considered extreme. The other feature article reports on the preparation of women who volunteered to be photographed for the Dove 2006 Calendar in order to take a stand on the representation of ‘real’ women by the media. Both articles picture and report on ‘everyday’ women preparing for a public presentation of their bodies that carries a message about how women’s bodies could look: a competition and a calendar.

The analysis followed Stern’s (1996) three step “workbench” by first identifying the attributes of each article separately, secondly examining the construction of meaning as conveyed through text and pictures and, finally, deconstructing these meanings. Deconstruction disassembles the cultural assumptions which are often best revealed through struggles over meaning (Davis 1997). Struggles over meaning not only expose power relations, but can also be sites for resistance, subversion and co-option (Martin et al 2006; Duff and Hong 1984). The deconstruction of the meaning of body activism represented in these articles used the themes of compliance, resistance and subversion, each a key strategy in body activism. For the purposes of this paper pertinent issues are distilled from the detailed analysis. Each article example will be presented and then followed by a discussion. [1]

RESISTANCE OR COMPLIANCE? DOVE CALENDAR GIRLS

The first article is introduced with a black and white picture spread over two pages showing a row of smiling women in underwear. They are all standing, gazing directly at the camera, most have an arm around the woman next to them and their names are given below. A heading also spreads across the two pages in white on black, lower case then all upper case reads “what we know now: “YOU HAVE TO LOVE YOUR BODY”” (Madison 2006, 220-221). This serves to divide the spread in half and below the message there are seven small shots presented in a collage style. A block of type presents the Dove position:

Dove took up the challenge of broadening the stereotype of beauty—selecting 19 real, unique and gorgeous women to star in their 2006 calendar. We went behind the scenes—and can guarantee there wasn’t an airbrush in sight. (Madison 2006, 221)

There might be no airbrush but the scenes are far from natural. Firstly the group pose is in the genre of the group photograph so beloved of schools, colleges and the army (Schrirato and Webb 2004, 140). This is a representation of body discipline, as theorized by Foucault, and the discursive intention is to present a collectivity within which no individual is distinctive (Schrirato and Webb 2004, 141). The direct gaze to the camera, the bodies “held together” and the imposition of order combine to convey the identity of the group and suggest compliant normalcy (Schrirato and Webb 2004, 142). However, rarely do groups present themselves in their underwear and being in underwear is usually coded as sexual availability and pornography. The choice of plain white Bonds underwear counteracts the overt sexualizing of the women but it is underwear nonetheless. Furthermore, there are several fully dressed men and women involved in the process of taking the pictures (several pictures include these people). Being in one’s underwear while others go about their day-to-day jobs fully dressed is not a usual experience. With a paradoxical lens, this is more commonly the experience of two quite particular groups; fashion models and strippers.

The second point to note is that the bodies are not presented naturally and the bodywork required is overtly celebrated in photos and text. Make up is applied by a professional, shown in three shots over the next four pages with the make up artist painting different parts of the women’s bodies such as backs of legs and abdomens.
There are also pictures of the hairdressers arranging hair and spraying so that the women’s hair is suitable to photograph. Lastly, pictures show two fully dressed men arranging the bodies of two women (in underwear) into a handstand position with their backs to each other and feet touching. No airbrush perhaps, but this is soft-core pornography. Do the women feel empowered by this process? Has their activism achieved a shift for women and their bodily representation?

Over the next four pages the women are presented in more detail. The larger dominant pictures are of single posed figures and comments made by the women about why they are involved are set out nearby. The contradictions that these women engage with when they consider their own embodiment emerges in words and pictures that meld together in a cultural discourse of femininity that portrays the ambiguity and discomforts that are faced in feminine bodywork. For example, Erika says:

I have one body and two choices. The first is to not be happy with myself. The second is to accept myself, even if I don’t fit the narrow stereotype of beauty (Madison 2006, 224).

Erika is pictured with her sister. She is slim to the extent that her ribs are visible with no obvious unsightlinesses that might bring on personal insecurities about looks so it is not clear which part of the stereotype she does not meet. As is noted by Englis et al. (1994) beauty for women can follow several different formulas each with its own manner of dressing and bodily presentation. Given this variation established in research, it is notable that Erika feels so much pressure from a single stereotype but not one that she elaborates on. Another woman, Yu Ling Ong, is more specific when referring to ideals in celebrities but her rejection of the aspirational stance continued in the title “Iron Maidens”. This woman expresses feelings of empowerment having pursued the body discipline of diet and exercise. However, taking one’s clothes off and revealing one’s body has always been an activity fraught with complexities of power and sexual innuendo, especially for women. The most celebrated celebrity ‘stripper’ is Madonna whose inversion of both the gaze, and her underwear, made her a cult figure in a subversive femininity that challenged the gender order (Gamman 1989), reminiscent of the resistance that is identified by Scott (2005) in her refutation of the feminist struggles over dress code.

However, revealed through this article are levels of compliance with a femininity that does not disturb the gender order, continues to valorize the position of the fashion model and very much reinforces the status quo for women, corporeally and otherwise. For example, pregnancy and motherhood are key to the comments of four women, (presented as three out of twelve calendar photographs). One of the women is pregnant, one has her baby with her and two are mother and daughter (the daughter is also a mother). “Pregnancy has made me a lot more confident about my body” the pregnant woman is quoted. But weight and shape (disciplinary bodywork) issues lurk not far from the surface. “Kate Hudson lost post-baby kilos in weeks, and Brittany too, but that’s the pressure they’re under. For most women, the body knows what it’s doing” (Madison 2006, 222). This woman’s text reveals a reference to ideals in celebrities but her rejection of the aspirational disciplined celebrity women returns to the calm that resides in the Cartesian dualism, the separation of the body and mind, where for women the body has the upper hand in knowledge. According to another woman who is a mother and is photographed with her own mother, motherhood brings a special relation to the world and, she says, “Being a mother you have a wider perspective” (Madison 2006, 222). Herein lies the difference between men and women. As child bearers, women have a different and specific relation to themselves, and to the rest of society and as child bearers they are ruled by their bodies. This is the difference that second wave feminists theorised extensively (Davis 1997) and is not a resistant stance but one of compliance with a gender order that valorizes maleness.

**RESISTANCE OR SUBVERSION? “IRON MAIDENS”**

The second article also shows a group of women who have developed enough self-esteem to present themselves, barely dressed, to an audience for scrutiny: bodybuilders. Again we are presented with a double page spread this time of intersecting, linked pictures in a collage effect. Six variously sized photos of bodybuilding women in front facing poses, present their bodies in bikinis. The second page has six small pictures showing application of false nails, a competitor sucking on a tube of condensed milk for a sugar hit, a woman flexing her back muscles, a bodybuilder in front of a notice that reads “drug testing no entry”, a competitor being helped into a bikini, and a competitor smiling with her husband. The overall visual impression is one of tan-coloured flesh, rhinestone bikinis and hair dressed in a manner suitable for a gala dinner. A couple of exceptions standout. The first has a grim face that could be interpreted as concentration, on the only bodybuilder whose long hair is hanging loose. Attention is draw to her because she has been placed front and centre. The other five women are smiling but only three are managing relaxed smiles. One woman looks more as if she is gritting her teeth with effort. The combination of the two pages is one of activity and busy-ness.

The next two pages have a solid half page of text topped by two strips of small photos. Of the seven photos in the strips, three focus on the bikini bottom area showing only crutch and tops of thighs. Two of these crutch shots are of the bodybuilding women posing (interestingly the names of the women are given for those body part shots) and the third crutch shot shows a competitor being sprayed with oil for competition. There is a small photo of golden coloured gym equipments with the caption “smart bodybuilders use dumb bells”. The facing page is the only full page picture of a bodybuilder and it is also distinctive because only two small linked insets have been placed in the bottom right corner; one of a winner holding a trophy and the other a daily routine of a bodybuilder. The bodybuilder is presented being sprayed with oil for competition. The sprayer is not visible, only a hand on a can with a mist of spray moving towards a sequined bikini clad body. The pose of this bodybuilder is not a competitive pose. She is standing with her arms wide, her chin up, her eyes closed and she has a closed-mouth smile. The effect is one of ecstasy, perhaps imagining, and one of vulnerability.

This visual representation of bodybuilding women is ambiguously resistive to prevailing femininities. On the one hand there is the sexualization of the shots, particularly those that highlight the crutch area, and also the ecstatic vulnerability of the bodybuilder being tanned. On the other hand, there is clear muscle definition shown in muscled poses that challenges notions of feminine bodies, the naturalness of bodies and the gender order (Duff and Hong 1984). However, taking a Barthesian stance that the language anchors the authorial intention, without necessarily implying a specific reading by receivers of text resolves the analysis.

The written text was heralded as unsupportive on the magazine cover with the line “My wife looks like The Terminator”. This stance continued in the title “Iron Maidens”. The text shifts to...
humanise (or excuse) bodybuilders by introducing Ann as a grandmother of four who came to bodybuilding for health reasons. She has lost “almost half her bodyweight” (Madison 2006, 45) and no longer needs her blood pressure tablets. The message “Welcome to the extreme world of competitive health” precedes a description of Australian Natural Bodybuilding (Madison 2006, 45). Mostly though, the text uses a tongue in cheek style to set up an ‘us and them’ scenario for the reader.

Pressure is a curious concept. For most of us, eating little more than protein powder and grilled chicken, then working out six time a week would be tough, but for these athletes (as they preferred to be called), pressure is a processed salty snack. (Madison 2006, 46)

The bracketed comment suggests that ‘we’ might wonder at such strict punishing self-discipline and might want to call this athleticism. The perception of where real pressure lies is the crux of the differences the author seems to intend the readership to feel. In spite of the potential here to challenge usual stereotypes of women, a reinforcement of the gender order is evident in the comments about “hulking men lifting free-weights and musclecd women in sparkling bikinis and towering perspex heels” (Madison 2006, 46). The men are described taking the active and physically strong role, while the women, who pursue the same activity, are merely appearing dressed in an alluring manner to be gazed on. And the point is taken up by a competitor who says that her mother refers to her as “a very muscly boy” (Madison 2006, 46). This conventionality about appropriate gender roles is further reinforced for the reader a couple of paragraphs later when the author asks, “Do muscles make girls feel less of a lady?” (Madison 2006, 46). The response from a competitor is quoted “The high heels make you look feminine” and also a response from a spectator who works out “My boyfriend doesn’t support me because he says he doesn’t want a muscly girlfriend. But that’s because he’s insecure” (Madison 2006, 46). This is striking because these were questions asked of women bodybuilders over twenty years ago (Duff and Hong 1984) and, in spite the potential for women’s bodybuilding to rupture the association of maleness with muscularity and strength, the evidence here is of no change. Despite reporting the near superhuman effort around workouts and eating regimes, bodybuilding women are not presented as worthy of high regard and the text not only detracts from their physical mastery but also re-asserts a focus on effort for appearance alone, with suggestions that this is not especially a reinforcement of the gender order. A useful way to theorise women’s subjectivities of postfeminism, for women the disciplinary gaze of society is not only about identity. Furthermore for women this is a quite particular relationship as a result of the prevailing gender order. A useful way to theorise women’s specific relationship to the cultural discourse of femininity, subjectivity and the gaze is offered by Smith, and this perspective offers a trajectory into the future that demands close consideration by brands that would be activist in this arena. Smith (1990, 162) argues that texts are part of social structure, social action and discourse in which texts “textually mediated discourses” (Smith 1990, 163). She argues that “doctrines and images of femininity are inextricable from the outset” (Smith 1990, 171), and in the everyday world of women, fashion magazines are like instruction manuals. The gap between the real and the ideal generates work for women and, once worked on, the body itself also becomes a text when reflected back as an image in the mirror. The body, for the feminine subject, is the object of the subject-at-work (Smith 1990, 189). Working on the body as the subject-at-work, interpreting the textually mediated discourses of femininity both hegemonic and non-hegemonic, a woman is a self-possessed individual with agency, which Smith calls a “secret agent” (1990, 191). It is when the object of her work, her body, is presented for viewing or, is displayed to be read as a social text, that she becomes the subject-in-discourse and is deprived of agency to become the object of the gaze (Smith 1990, 206). The gaze is the key to the viewed and displayed women of the calendar and the bodybuilding competition. The power differential expressed in the gaze derives from:

the ubiquitous ideality of the textual image with its power to form the standards under which we are judged and read, and with which we judge and read others. (Smith 1990, 206)

DISCUSSION

Overall then, two kinds of women’s body activism were represented in this cultural artifact. Some women felt strongly about the manner of their representation in the media and were prepared to take a stand and be photographed for a calendar. Other women exert enormous effort to change the appearance of their bodies going beyond dress to change their actual body shape. None of these women labeled themselves feminists, nor worked in any concerted manner for overt political ends, but all took an activist stance. The sparkly bikinis were more erotic than the plain white underwear, but both types of resistance were presented for our gaze in vulnerable near nakedness. Resistance can be empowering and women in both examples make statements to that effect. However, as Budgeon and Currie (1995) noted, resistance is not inherently politicising. Although the calendar girls are presented sympathetically as resisting an undefined stereotype, presumably fashion model skinliness given the positioning statement from the brand that attempts to intervene here, Dove, they are nonetheless compli-ant with a hegemonic femininity. This is the discourse of femininity that suggests that women must work hard to overcome their insecurities about their bodies, that their bodies usually know better than they do and that through motherhood they will achieve a special relationship to the world. In contrast, the bodybuilders constructed their bodies themselves and controlled their bodies through discipline to produce visible muscles. This body activism was sufficiently resistant to require an unsympathetic presentation to the readership, but was this subversive?

The underlying key to discussions of women’s body activism is the gaze (Foucault 1977). Even in experimental, multiple subjectivities of postfeminism, for women the disciplinary gaze of society at large, the presentation of self in everyday life has a specific effect. Identity is visually presented for the wider community to assess but, importantly, subjectivity as it interfaces with society is not only about identity. Furthermore for women this is a quite particular relationship as a result of the prevailing gender order. A useful way to theorise women’s specific relationship to the cultural discourse of femininity, subjectivity and the gaze is offered by Smith, and this perspective offers a trajectory into the future that demands close consideration by brands that would be activist in this arena. Smith (1990, 162) argues that texts are part of social structure, social action and discourse in which texts “textually mediated discourses” (Smith 1990, 163). She argues that “doctrines and images of femininity are inextricable from the outset” (Smith 1990, 171), and in the everyday world of women, fashion magazines are like instruction manuals. The gap between the real and the ideal generates work for women and, once worked on, the body itself also becomes a text when reflected back as an image in the mirror. The body, for the feminine subject, is the object of the subject-at-work (Smith 1990, 189). Working on the body as the subject-at-work, interpreting the textually mediated discourses of femininity both hegemonic and non-hegemonic, a woman is a self-possessed individual with agency, which Smith calls a “secret agent” (1990, 191). It is when the object of her work, her body, is presented for viewing or, is displayed to be read as a social text, that she becomes the subject-in-discourse and is deprived of agency to become the object of the gaze (Smith 1990, 206). The gaze is the key to the viewed and displayed women of the calendar and the bodybuilding competition. The power differential expressed in the gaze derives from:
It is through this effect of the social text that the discourse of femininity (and fashion) absorbs the initiatives and countermoves from elsewhere in recuperative ways. This was seen in the presentation of women as mothers in the calendar example where ideals of celebrity were aspirational as fashion models and then as actresses who lost weight quickly after pregnancy through impressive body discipline. The latter course was rejected and the Cartesian dualism of body dominance for the female subject was reasserted. Through the mirror women gaze upon themselves using the view that they anticipate others might have of them. This is the controlling, Panopticon gaze that refashions resistance and recuperates the message (Brace-Govan 2002). The gaze allows for multiple idealities (Englis et al. 1994; Scott 2005) but, importantly, there are boundaries which were clearly exposed in the unsupportive, distanced presentation of women bodybuilders as too different from “us”, even when they were mothers.

However, if the mirrored gaze is the key to recuperation in women’s body activism, then resistance to the mirror would offer a start position to successful subversion. For example women bikers (Martin et al. 2006) or a focus on physical mastery (Brace-Govan 2004), as men do in sport (Connell 2000). Here is a discursive space for subversion but the paradoxes for women, their bodies, their appearance and their representation are still open questions for both social activism and academic research in the constantly shifting terrain of gender representation. It is important that subversive women resist not only conventional femininity but also their relationship to the mirrored gaze. In this lies the possibility of a significant challenge to the gender order and research that investigates such processes would have much to offer the marketing discourse. Research within this space would be in a good position to advise on long and short term brand strategies around social activist interventions.

In the example presented here, Smith’s formulation exposes a brand strategy of activism around women’s bodily representation as problematic in the long term. For the brand in the short term a focus on women being themselves without fear of the judgemental Panopticon is most enticing. This gives access to the subject creating space of Smith’s “secret agent” and a place where women engage collectively giving further access to word of mouth. As such the brand will be drawn into the private space of the subject-at-work, and given that Dove products are directed to these activities, this is appropriate. However, long term the activist stance of Dove’s brand strategy is doomed to failure because women present themselves in public, become the subject-in-discourse and subject themselves to the gaze. Unless Dove becomes truly subversive and works to change the gender order so that for women the recuperation of the gaze ends and self presentation for women is truly individualised, this strategy will ultimately lose momentum due to lack of any significant change. Perversely, the lack of change leaves no room for the brand to disengage, because this would betray the trust of women in Dove. The recuperative effects of the gaze are profound for women and constantly, consistently draw them back to a particular relationship with their visual identity, in defiance of the rhetoric of postfeminism. Smith’s (1990) formulation teases out the role of aspirational ideals, the role of the media, and the complex dual relationship of the mirror and gaze to women, and their subjectivity, as it interfaces with culture and social structure. It is the obscured complexity of the gaze and the subject-in-discourse that poses the long-term problem for the Dove brand in this strategy of activism around the representation of women in the media. Research that pursues these complexities and offers fully theorised future trajectories has much to offer activism and brand strategy decision-making.

Note: Every effort was made to include the pictures but permission was not given.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Changes in technology, culture and politics have transformed the meaning of consumption in society toward a recognition that consumption is a creative act (Baudrillard 1981; Featherstone 1991; Firat and Venkatesh 1993, 1995), requiring consumers’ activities to be reconsidered for broader insights into the human condition through consumer research. In this new frontier, for the past three decades, understanding consumer activism under the context of ‘new social movements’ (Touraine 1977; Melucci 1996) has become particularly important, especially in illuminating concerns such as anti-branding, ecology, and anti-globalization (Firat 2004; Kozinets and Handelman 2004). Providing space for cultural growth and experimentations, social movements are no longer merely political activities where, at times, musical and other kinds of cultural traditions are made and remade (Eyerman and Jamison 1998). The research reported in this paper explores the role and place of music as it influences social movements. Such investigations can be used to better interpret different contexts of consumption and production.

Activists often try to distinguish the political from the cultural and, partly as a result of this separation, social movements are usually discussed and interpreted in political terms (i.e., ideologies, tactics, issues, campaigns, strategies, organizations). Yet, the setting of a social movement contains more meanings for cultural experience. When present in such settings, musical effects are always supplanted by their discursive and social contexts. In fact, music makes available possible identities, constructs audiences, bears of traditions, are powerful weapons in the hands of the activists, and unions. Removal of money from the artistic domain in this way symbolizes the protection of amateurism and naivété for activists. However, the market logic has slowly started to become apparent in representations and orientations of the activists due to their increasing power, pointing to tensions between collective and individual identities. For example, instead of targeting a single global brand as their adversary, they currently share all other global activism concerns and try to establish international liaisons to make the activity a bigger ‘happening’. Eventually, the success of Rock for Peace, which started as a means to protest against the dominance of the market, has become an end in itself. Ironically, the market logic has been reflected not only with the increase in the number of adversaries, but also in the number of supporters. Previously hesitant ‘activist’—rock bands strive to perform in this now popular and crowded festival, but unfortunately not all of them are ‘eligible’ as the activists aim to select the best band to perform. Findings reveal that the rock festival not only becomes a place for rockers, artists, workers and students to become a part of the cause, but especially creates an exclusive space for the ‘activists’.

From a consumer research perspective, these observations show how music becomes an instrument in consumer activities, as discussions among the participants largely revolve around the topic of music; having the power to acclaim the authenticity of musical codes, activists can reject some bands for not performing “the real rock,” or some of them want to utilize the rock culture dictum to attract more bands to improve the popularity of the festival. Confirming the relationship between power and music (Attali 1985), music acts both as a catalyst (i.e., mobilizing the crowds by celebrity rock bands) and a paravane in consumption activities (i.e., global ‘rock culture’ represents a legitimate discourse and a base to maintain peace and equality and actualize possible identities). Finally, the emerging themes all denote a multiplicity of meanings, as well as emerging tensions among and the significance of (glocal) aesthetic codes in interpreting them.

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Ethical Dimensions of Sustainable Marketing: A Consumer Policy Perspective
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ABSTRACT
This paper works towards a better understanding of sustainability and social responsibility in business practice by elaborating on the prevalent approaches to environmental ethics and social responsibility that inform the discussion on sustainable marketing in the literature. Three different approaches to normative environmental ethics are identified (consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics), and the roles and responsibilities that different market actors have in each approach are analyzed. Conclusions are drawn particularly for environmental and consumer policy.

INTRODUCTION
Social responsibility and sustainability can be regarded as the watchwords of the 21st century. Among academics and practitioners alike, there has been a growing interest in business ethics and the responsibility of business communities towards society. In business research, much of this discussion has revolved around corporate social responsibility (CSR), corporate citizenship and the role of business activity in sustainable development (Carroll 1999; Collier 1995; Collier and Wanderley 2005; Crane 1999; Crane and Matten 2004; Doane 2005; Maignan and Ferrell 2004; Rondinelli and Berry 2000). Sustainability, in these discussions, usually refers to the long-term maintenance of systems according to environmental, economic and social considerations (Crane and Matten 2004).

Also in business practice, the topics of social responsibility, business ethics and sustainable business development have emerged in the corporate agenda (Collier and Wanderley 2005; Rainey 2006). In specifying and communicating their corporate values, for example, many contemporary business organizations currently express their commitment to social responsibility and sustainable development and thus also publish environmental and social reports as part of their investor relations programs (Doane 2005; Hummels and Diediker 2004).

In much of the recent discussion on these topics, marketing has been identified as a way to integrate social responsibility into business organizations, to promote more sustainable lifestyles as well as developed and diffuse sustainability innovations (Maignan and Ferrell 2004; Maignan et al. 2005; UNEP 2005). Marketing decisions have important consequences for the specific ways in which goods and services are produced and distributed in the markets, and thus on the resource use and waste generation patterns that can be attributed to the products and services of a company. Moreover, through internal marketing and marketing communication companies implement their strategic values and communicate their commitment to sustainability to their customers, employees, supply networks and other business partners (Polonsky and Ottman 1998).

Unfortunately, however, in the existing literature the concept of sustainability and the responsibilities that it entails are not at all clear. Both in theory and practice, sustainability and social responsibility mean very different things to different people (Cairncross 1993; Crane 2000; Crane and Matten 2004), and ‘corporate social responsibility’ continues to be a contested concept (Doane 2005; McWilliams et al. 2006). As a result, both researchers and business practitioners still seem to be struggling to understand how the principles of sustainability can be integrated successfully into business practice (Greenfield 2004).

In this paper, our aim is to work towards a better understanding of sustainability and social responsibility in business practice by elaborating on the prevalent approaches to environmental ethics and social responsibility that inform the discussion on sustainable marketing in the existing literature. We also analyze how the roles and responsibilities of different market actors are depicted in these different approaches to sustainable marketing, drawing conclusions particularly for consumer policy.

Our analysis is premised upon the idea that to develop and implement effective strategies for sustainable and socially responsible marketing, companies need to view themselves as ethical subjects and corporate citizens. Sustainable marketing entails complex ethical issues and requires that the company makes informed and justified ethical judgments about what is right and fair for all members of society—also from a consumer policy perspective. And to be able to make well informed and carefully justified ethical judgments they need to carefully analyze and evaluate the concepts, principles, and theories that they appeal to in defining and defending their philosophies and normative claims about sustainable marketing.

In the sections that follow, we first discuss how sustainability and social responsibility is conceptualized in marketing literature. Then we discuss the different approaches to environmental ethics that inform this literature and the public discussion on sustainable marketing, focusing particularly on the roles and responsibilities that each of the approaches ascribe to different market actors. Finally, we draw conclusions from this analysis for consumer and environmental policy.

SUSTAINABILITY IN MARKETING LITERATURE
Over the last twenty years, ever since the term ‘sustainable development’ was introduced by the Brundtland Commission and defined as ‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987), ‘sustainability’ has been a significant conceptual tool for assessing not only economic and social development, but also business activity more generally (Crane & Matten 2004). The Rio Declaration in 1992 and the follow-up World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 further fostered the discussion on these topics and opened up new directions for the debate on the roles and responsibilities of business organizations in society. Hence, from the early 1990s onwards the discussion on sustainability has been extended into the field of business activity, and the terms ‘sustainable’ and ‘sustainability’ have been integrated into the standard business jargon. The beginning of “sustainable marketing”, however, can be dated back to the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the appropriate scope and the societal role of marketing was discussed and debated among marketing scholars (Dawson 1971; Feldman 1971; Kelley 1971; Kotler and Levy 1969, 1971; Kotler and Zaltman 1971; Lavidge 1970; Lazer 1969). In the following sections we discuss the emergence of sustainable marketing in its different theoretical forms in the history of marketing thought.

In the marketing literature of the late 1960s and early 1970s, there was a critical self-reflection and debate on the role of marketing in the processes of social and environmental change (Anderson...
and Cunningham 1972; Fisk 1974; Kelley 1971; Lavidge 1970). In some accounts, this self-reflection also involved an ethical and societal problematization of marketing as an institution as well as calls for business organizations to accept more responsibility in society as corporate-citizens (Dawson 1971; Lazer 1969; Lazer and Kelley 1973). Kelley (1971: 2), for example, called for a shifting of the emphasis of marketers from "individual want satisfaction to societal considerations". Dawson (1971: 67), for his part, argued that "It is important to recognize that this thrust of interest in consumer welfare extends well beyond simple dissatisfactions of customers with allegedly inferior products. It covers the entire question of the nations poor, the minority groups, the elderly, and other disadvantaged citizens in terms of their ability to receive fair treatment in the marketplace."

Along these lines, Kotler (1972) made an endeavour to broaden the traditional marketing concept by introducing the societal marketing concept, which called for a customer orientation backed by integrated marketing and aimed at generating customer satisfaction and long-run consumer welfare as the key to attaining long-run profitability. While societal marketing responded primarily to the concerns of consumerism, the demands of environmentalism were taken up by other marketing scholars, who realized that the ecological challenge would call for deep changes in the marketing discipline, including the education of both consumers and marketers regarding the relationship between their daily decision-making and the natural environment (Feldman 1971; Fisk 1973, 1974). Feldman (1971), for example, stressed the importance of marketing for understanding and influencing life styles, as well as for determining the extent to which our society may be channelled into sounder consumption practices.

In this regard, Fisk (1973, 1974) made an important contribution by proposing the theory of responsible consumption and the ecological imperative, which stress the responsibility of marketers to work towards limiting individual consumption. From this perspective, a major social goal of marketing is to encourage responsible rather than frivolous consumption by involving the consumer as an informed responsible market actor. In another effort to provide further solutions to environmental problems Henion and Kinnear (1976) introduced ecological marketing, which is concerned with all marketing activities: (1) activities that have served to help cause environmental problems, and (2) activities that may serve to provide a remedy for environmental problems. The objective of introducing these concepts was to help marketers respond to social and environmental problems to maintain corporate legitimacy in the face of shifting social values and burgeoning civil movements (Crane 2000).

While research and academic discussion on social responsibility continued uninterrupted in the field of management during the 1980s, further efforts by marketing scholars were not channelled in that direction. Despite the initial boom of contributions in the 1970s, the discussion on the responsibilities of marketing toward the environment and society somewhat faded away, relegating the new marketing field to the annals of marketing history (Mintu and Lozada 1993; Sheth et al. 1988). It has been suggested that the recessions that originated from the oil crises of 1973 and 1980, together with a strong faith in the ability of the market mechanism to correct environmental imbalances, and the lack of committed interest among marketing practitioners in environmental and social issues made it difficult, at the time, for marketing scholars to engage themselves in further research in this area (Peattie 1995; Sheth and Parvatiyar 1995; Sheth et al. 1988). It was not until the late 1980s—when environmental and social problems were again in the focus of public attention—that the discussion on the role of marketing in society re-emerged and new concepts, such as green marketing, environmental marketing and enviropreneurial marketing, were introduced (Charter 1992; Coddington 1993; Menon and Menon 1997; Mintu and Lozada 1993; Peattie 1992, 1995; Peattie and Crane 2005; Varadarajan and Menon 1988).

The 1990s represented a new era for the further development of sustainable marketing (Mintu and Lozada 1993). Mintu and Lozada (1993), for example, proposed a definition of green marketing as the application of the marketing concept and tools to facilitate exchanges that satisfy organizational and individual goals in such a way that the preservation, protection, and conservation of the physical environment is upheld. In contrast to the concept of ecological marketing, this approach prescribed a more proactive role for marketers, not only in monitoring the negative impacts of marketing activities on the natural environment but also in actively engaging in practices that reduce or minimize these impacts.

At that time, also the need to turn the environmental imperative into profitable business opportunities was discussed. Walter Coddington (1993), a communications consultant, introduced the concept of envirnmental marketing, emphasizing the significance of environmental stewardship not only as a business development responsibility but also as an opportunity for business growth. According to this line of thinking, the success of such a sound business strategy lies mainly on the attitude of the management team regarding the role of the firm in relation to the environment. It was not until 1995, however, that the term sustainable marketing was coined by Sheth and Parvatiyar (1995) who discussed marketing efforts that are both competitively and ecologically sustainable. Taking a macro-marketing perspective, they recognized the link between marketing and sustainable development and as a result, also the urgent need to move from the current consumption marketing to a more sustainable marketing. According to them, sustainability can only be achieved by combining active government intervention with proactive marketing targeting at sounder consumption and production patterns. Taking a more managerial perspective, Menon and Menon (1997) also proposed the concept of enviropreneurial marketing, referring to the process of formulating and implementing entrepreneurial and environmentally beneficial marketing activities with the goal of creating revenue by providing exchanges that satisfy a firm's economic and social performance objectives (see also Varadarajan 1992).

In much of the discussion on the topic, however, sustainable marketing has been discussed in terms of a mere logical extension of the mainstream, managerial, marketing concept (Crane and Desmond 2002; Kilbourne 1998). Fuller (1999: 4), for example, redefines the concept as the process of planning, implementing, and controlling the development, pricing, promotion, and distribution of products in a manner that satisfies the following three criteria: (1) customer needs are met, (2) organizational goals are attained, and (3) the process is compatible with ecosystems. This stream of research tends to be based on a distinctively managerial, micro-marketing approach as opposed to more societal, macromarketing perspective to sustainable marketing. In this literature, sustainable marketing, in its different forms, is primarily represented as a managerial technique, and the moral values and principles on which it is based have tended to remain implicit.

It is the thesis of this paper, however, that sustainable marketing is fundamentally an ethical issue, and should therefore be discussed as a philosophical and political question of environmental ethics. Next we shall discuss the prevalent approaches to
environmental ethics that inform and structure the discussion on sustainable marketing

PREVALENT APPROACHES TO ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS AND SUSTAINABLE MARKETING

In general, discussions on sustainable marketing are based on a tacit understanding that it is morally wrong for individuals and firms to pollute and destroy the natural environment or use it in a way that poses threats to the ecological stability of the planet. It is acknowledged that neither social nor economic goals can be achieved without a healthy ecological system and therefore it is the moral responsibility of individuals and firms to refrain from destroying it. The theoretical development of sustainable marketing thus clearly involves an attempt to determine and frame the goals of business activities from an ethical perspective (Crane and Matten 2004).

The moral basis of this theoretical development, however, is very seldom elaborated. Accordingly with the managerial approach to marketing, it is implicitly assumed that morality is something singular; that there is only one appropriate perspective on morality that applies. Yet, in moral theory there are a number of different approaches to ethics, and firms and individuals have multiple perspectives to choose from when making their ethical judgments. Therefore, it would seem important to identify the values and implicit understandings about ethics that guide and constrain thinking and talking about sustainability and sustainable marketing in organizations and which also provide a rationale and legitimization for managerial practices. Here we discuss three major approaches to normative environmental ethics (Brennan 2002): consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics, discussing also the roles that these approaches prescribe to consumers in sustainable development.

Consequentialist approaches

The reasoning found in consequentialist ethical theories suggests that the rightness or wrongness of an action is determined by its consequences (bad/good). From a consequentialist perspective, the environment has only instrumental value, since it is regarded as a means to satisfy human needs and interests. Therefore, intrinsic value is not attributed to the natural environment itself but to the pleasure and satisfaction it provides for human-beings. Within environmental ethics consequentialism has arguably been the most prominent consequentialist theory.1

From the utilitarian perspective, the ethical status of behavior is evaluated based on its consequences (e.g. Smart and Williams 1973). Moral subjects are thus to judge their acts and decisions in terms of their utility or their usefulness in producing good consequences. The morally responsible green consumer, for example, “takes into account the public consequences of his or her private consumption” (Webster 1975: 188). Since consequentialism is social in character and focuses on the welfare of society as a unit (Robin and Reidenbach 1987), a given decision is usually considered ‘right’ if it brings about positive consequences for all people involved, preferably producing the greatest good for the greatest number of people. From this perspective, the protection of the environment is morally right as long as it implies a greater balance of pleasure over pain for the greatest number of human beings.

While utilitarianism comes in different varieties (see Curd 1992), in the public discussion on environmentalism and sustainable marketing, it often takes the form of act consequentialism, according to which the rightness of each individual act is evaluated based on its consequences (the unit of moral analysis is an individual act). In the context of eco-labels, it also takes the form of rule consequentialism, according to which the rightness of individual acts is evaluated based on specific moral rules to which the principle of utility is applied. The ethical status of a consumer’s product choice, for example, is evaluated by testing whether or not it falls under a certain moral rule, such as “buy eco-labeled products when available”. And this rule is crafted and evaluated based on considerations of the consequences that result from consumers adopting that rule (the unit of analysis is the moral rule). Either way, the ethical status of marketplace behavior is based on complex and controversial analyses of the environmental consequences of different choices and practices—which ideally would need to be quantified and measured for comparison.

From a critical consumer policy perspective, however, utilitarian ethics may be problematic for a number of reasons (Moisander 2007). In particular, it holds consumers responsible also for things that they cannot control. Consumers and their actions are judged by the consequences of their acts even when they have no way of anticipating or controlling all the consequences that their actions have (Des Jardins 1997). Moreover, utilitarian approaches to environmental ethics and sustainable marketing often de-politicize sustainable development by downplaying the importance of the social and political dimensions of environmental problems. When representing sustainable development primarily as an economic problem, utilitarian ethical positions tend to represent sustainable development merely as a question of utility, satisfaction and individual responsibilities. As Des Jardins (1997: 30) has convincingly argued

In doing this, we can easily overlook how much our choices, attitudes, and values are influenced and limited by what is outside. Human beings not only create and shape their social institutions; these institutions in turn create and shape humans’ attitudes, beliefs and values. Ethics must also challenge us to look at our social institutions and ask what are they doing to us and for us? Are our social institutions just? Are burdens and benefits distributed fairly? Do our social and political arrangements encourage cooperation and community or competition and domination? How is power distributed, how is it limited? How should we—as a group, not individuals—live?

Deontological approaches

Deontological approaches to environmental ethics are based on the idea that there are distinct moral rules or duties, and the violation of these rules and duties is intrinsically wrong, while observance is intrinsically right (Brennan 2002). In the context of deontological approaches to environmental ethics, these rules and duties are based on the intrinsic value of the environment. It is taken that the environment has a moral right to respectful treatment, and this generates a moral duty to humans to protect it. In other words,
we have a prima facie duty not to harm it. Hence, while consequentialist theories require us to only protect the environment as long as we maximize the overall good consequences, deontology argues that fulfilling duties and respecting rights leads automatically to something good.

Deontological approaches to environmental ethics can take different forms depending on how intrinsic value is ascribed to different elements of the natural environment. Some approaches are anthropocentric or human-centered in the sense that they assign intrinsic value only to human beings (anthropocentric in an absolute sense) or they assign significantly more intrinsic value to human beings that to non-human things (Brennan 2002). Nonanthropocentric approaches, for their part, grant a moral standing to natural objects and thus recognize intrinsic value in the environment. Biocentric approaches are based on giving intrinsic value to all the organisms of the biosphere and ecocentrism grant intrinsic value to ecosphere as a whole. In marketing literature, however, it usually is some form of anthropocentric thinking that provides the basis for deontological approaches to environmental ethics, considering the rights of consumers (human-beings) rather than the natural environment (see e.g. Robin and Reidenbach 1987).

In the literature on sustainable marketing, deontological approaches to environmental ethics are hard to find. There seem to be grounds for assuming, however, that being a deeply concerned and dedicated environmentalist often involves a commitment to some sort of a prima facie duty, i.e., a duty that is obvious or evident without proof or reasoning (Moisander 2007). Harré et al. (1999), for example, have found that the moral discourse that many environmentalist organizations such as the Sierra Club rely on is deontological in flavor, placing an emphasis on doing something right in itself rather than for some practical end.

Moreover, while firms are usually expected to prescribe to some sort of anthropocentric approaches to environmental ethics, they might as well base their moral deliberations on some sort of biocentric or ecocentric accounts. They might well argue that sustainable development would downright require that consumers ascribe some kind of objective value to nature and adopt a moral obligation to protect all living things. They might well believe that the flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth has intrinsic value and that the value and rights of non-human life forms are independent of the usefulness they have for narrow human purposes. It may well be that some ‘environmentally responsible’ firms consider a given environmentally sensitive moral decision ‘right’ primarily because of some religious moral beliefs or moral obligations based on deontological and/or ecocentric ethical considerations, such as the respect for ‘mother earth’ or ‘healthy planet’ (see e.g. Patagonia, http://www.patagonia.com and Stonyfield, http://www.stonyfield.com).

From a consumer policy perspective, de-ontological approaches to environmental ethics would seem to pay more attention to the socio-political aspects of sustainable development. The wide scope of the different positions would also seem to encourage discussion and debate on the values on which sustainable development should be based on. From this perspective, deontological approaches to sustainable marketing might well foster transformative criticism and dialogue between different market actors and members of society.

Virtue ethics

Virtue ethics shifts the focus from rules, rights and utility to the moral character of the decision maker. It implies viewing both the environment and ourselves in a different way (Des Jardins 1997). Virtue ethics contends that morally correct actions are those under-taken by actors with a virtuous character and who pursue virtues such as wisdom, honesty, friendship, mercy, etc.

Central to ethics of virtue is the notion of “good life”. From a business perspective “good life” means more than profit generation and market share (Crane and Matten 2004). Indeed, virtue ethics involves a much more holistic approach to business, since not only profits but also employees’ satisfaction, good relationships with internal as well as external stakeholders are considered as important aspects of good business life (Collier 1995). Overall, considering virtues in environmental ethics helps us to determine not only what we want but also what we are (Sagoff 1990).

Virtue ethics has played an important role in the adoption of sustainable marketing by business organizations. For example, firms such as Ben and Jerry’s, Tom’s of Maine and the Body Shop have followed the instincts and personal values (virtuousness) of their leaders in determining their moral stance rather than taking a customer-led approach (Crane 2005). This reflects the extent to which the motivation and justification of actions are intertwined with the character traits of the acting agent (market actor). The moral character of the company’s leader can, as a result, be spread through the whole organization and its stakeholders. According to Collier and Esteban (1999), the notion of virtue gains meaning in practice where it contributes to developing excellence based on human capabilities. Although virtue ethics can be found in the practical application of sustainable marketing, this ethical approach has not been yet discussed within the literature related to sustainable marketing.

DISCUSSION AND CONSUMER POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The brief analysis above shows that the prevalent utilitarian approaches to environmental ethics are only one alternative way of deliberating on the ethical issues that sustainable marketing involves. Other possibilities include to act on principle, independently of its anticipated consequences, based on duties and rights (deontology) or to base one’s deliberations on some sort of religious teleological reasoning and to pursue some virtues related to environmental protection. In pursuing sustainability, firms, consumers and policy-makers thus have a number of different options in framing and determining their goals, decisions and strategies.

Our analysis also indicates that each of these ethical approaches to sustainable marketing tends to ascribe somewhat different roles, rights and responsibilities for different market actors. It is therefore important, we argue, to analyze the assumptions and beliefs about morality and sustainability that different environmental policy measures are based on, as well as to critically evaluate the complex implications of these assumptions for consumer agency. It would seem particularly important to acknowledge that sustainability is a complex issue, which entails complex political, socioeconomic, and moral questions.

Finally, our analysis suggests that environmental ethics may offer a valuable perspective and a set of useful conceptual tools for the further theoretical development of sustainable marketing. Ethical discussion and debate on the roles, rights and responsibilities of different market actors arguably contributes to better understanding of not only the theoretical assumptions but also the social values, norms and beliefs that guide and constrain thinking and talking about sustainability in organizations, be they private, public, or NGOs, as well as among consumers and policy-makers. It is important to know these values and beliefs because they provide a rationale and legitimization for managerial practices.

To conclude, we therefore argue that from a consumer policy perspective, the major challenge for sustainable marketing is to foster moral reflection and constructive dialogues with the appro-
priate roles, rights and responsibilities of different market actors in society. There is a need to view sustainable marketing as a social process which involves multiple moral actors. Not only firms, but also consumers and other stakeholders play a key role in moving the global economy towards sustainability. This discussion and debate may not diminish the complexity of sustainable development but it may serve to make the phenomenon more transparent for all parties involved.

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SESSION SUMMARY

Celebrity buyer Nicole Richie (heiress to Lionel Richie’s music fortune) has hair extensions put in her poodle Honey’s hair each week to match her own (VH-1 Dec. 10, 2005). Many popular press articles recognize apparent extravagant spending on pets. For example, jewelry for dogs costing $200, a pet mobile phone costing $349, or pet beds costing $700+ are some extreme examples (Howard 2005). However, very little academic work has studied pet consumption and experience. This session includes papers that provide some reasons for such spending behaviors—excessive spending on pets, relationship satisfaction, self-identity through pets and personality development and memory.

There are several contributions of the proposed session. First, the content area is one of recent interest. There are literally dozens of recent popular press articles dedicated to the topic of pet consumption (including a new magazine called Hollywood Dogs). Moreover, the current year-long best selling book Marley and Me illustrates the current general interest in pet companions. Second, pets are an incredibly important part of our lives, they contribute to our well-being and we contribute to their well-being. An understanding of the reciprocal relationships between humans and pets is likely to provide insights into human relationships and provide new ways of thinking about self-identity, extended self, possessions and relationship partners. The fact that there is a special issue due out in 2007 at the Journal of Business Research dedicated to this topic adds to the credibility of having a special session on the importance of pets in consumers’ lives.

The papers in the session are very different and touch on a variety of aspects of pet consumption. As a result, the session provides a well-rounded variety of both theories and methods within the primary subject area. The first two papers use quantitative data, while the second two use qualitative data. The first paper examines the relationship between excessive spending on pets and spending excessively on oneself (buying primarily clothing and accessories). Using compulsive buying theory as a foundation for the paper, the authors show that there is a relationship between consumers’ tendency to buy excessively for oneself and on one’s pets. The second paper uses personality theory to examine the contribution that pets make to humans’ relationship satisfaction and sense of well-being. Personality measures of both pets and pet owners show that pets’ personalities play a dominant role in owners’ well-being. Relationship closeness increases over time. Both of these findings provide some provocative avenues for future research on intimacy and relationship life-stage.

The methodology in the third paper uses self-reflections in the form of essays written by the investigators. The essays follow the lives of dogs from puppy hood until death. The four major themes that emerge are: the innocence of owners in the initial engagement and puppy selection process, early adjustment and relationship development, permanent bonds and loving intimacy as pets become integrated into the family, and special events and life transitions as pets help us through the tribulations in our lives. The third paper sets up the fourth paper very well, as it deals with the death of a dog and the authors’ memories of the event and of the beloved pet. Using Freudian theory, the paper reveals that dog ownership is a reciprocal relationship supported by the development (in the dog) of a superego that reflects the owner’s values. Documenting the death of one of the investigator’s dogs provides evidence that both Freudian theory and memory theory play an important role in dog ownership and post-ownership.

The audience for this session would include those specifically interested in the phenomenon of pet ownership as well as those interested in understanding the special connection between owners and their pets and the consumption patterns that support these special relationships.

ABSTRACTS

“Over-Spending on Pets: The Relationship with Excessive Buying”

Nancy Ridgway, University of Richmond, USA
Monika Kukar-Kinney, University of Richmond, USA
Kent Monroe, University of Richmond and the University of Illinois, USA
Emily Chamberlin, University of Richmond, USA

Marketing researchers have studied pet companionship and the concept of pets (especially dogs) as family members for some time (Belk 1988; Hirschman 1994; Holbrook et al. 2001). An important area receiving attention in recent years is increased consumption for one’s pet (McLean 2004). Spending on pets has nearly doubled over the past 10 years (Kennedy 2006). The popular press keeps close tabs on celebrities and their extravagant spending on their dogs. For example, Nicole Richie has hair extensions put in her dog’s fur that match her own. (VH-1 2005). Similarly, Paris Hilton’s dog wears a diamond bracelet as a collar (Hollywood Dogs 2005). For non-celebrities, there are stores and websites selling dog jewelry for $200, a pet mobile phone priced at $349 and pet beds priced at $700-$800 (Howard 2005).

The present research uses two studies to investigate a possible reason underlying profuse expenditures on pets, specifically as related to a dispositional trait to engage in excessive buying for oneself. If pets, as Belk (1988) proposes, are an extension of us, spending on one’s pet may be tantamount to spending on oneself. Thus, we expect that people who tend to spend excessively on themselves are also likely to spend excessively on their pets.

Most researchers find that the vast majority of pet owners consider their pets to be part of the family, with dogs most likely to fill this role. Explanations of why dogs are likely to be included in the family include their ability to facilitate human relationships, the fact that they maintain a childlike look throughout most of their lives and they give unconditional love and companionship (Hirschman, 1994). These explanations, alone, however, do not explain the relatively recent extravagant spending on one’s pets.

Studies of compulsive and excessive buying have received increasing interest in the consumer behavior literature (Black 2001; Faber and O’Guinn 1992; Koran et al. 2006). Unlike compulsive buyers, whose classification depends on financial harm, excessive buyers represent a broader group of consumers who may suffer
from emotional consequences, not necessarily financial ones (Ridgway, Kukar-Kinney and Monroe 2005). Thus, excessive buyers represent a broader group of consumers.

In the first study, a focus group of nine pet owners was conducted. The focus group participants were recruited from an ad placed in a local weekly entertainment magazine, which called for participants who were both “shopaholics” and spent a lot of money on their pet. The following three major themes (with a sample verbatim from each) emerged: (1) excessive buying for pets (“Charlotte has lots of clothes. She has a little argyle sweater and she has a little jacket... She has Halloween costumes. This year she was a ladybug.”); (2) excessive buying for self (“Well, handbags are my weakness... I have over a hundred bags... It is definitely a high when I find that bag”); and (3) pets as children that need to be taken care of (“We can’t say no to Eda. We would sacrifice for ourselves to do stuff with her... When it is her birthday, we buy her a cake and invite the other dog friends... So we indulge her and we feel like good parents.”).

Study 2 was a quantitative study. Customers of an Internet clothing retailer were surveyed about their pet buying. Of those who responded, 62% owned one or more pets. The participants responded to an excessive buying scale, questions about frequency of buying for their pet, holiday season spending and Internet and bricks-and-mortar spending. As predicted, consumers who spent excessively on themselves bought more frequently for their pets, spent more on their pet during the holiday season, and spent more per month on their pet both online as well as at traditional retail stores.

Our research suggests that those who spend excessively on themselves are more likely to also spend excessively for their pets. In the larger sample of survey respondents from which pet owners were identified, 12% of the sample was classified as showing a tendency to buy excessively. However, for the sub-sample of pet owners, 25% exhibited a tendency to buy excessively. This observation leads to some areas for further research. First, since pets are often viewed as children, does excessive buying for pets fulfill the need to over-spend on one’s children? Second, the relationship between low self-esteem and excessive buyers has been shown by many researchers (e.g., Faber and O’Guinn 1992). By giving unconditional love, do pets enhance owners’ self-esteem, and does this lead to more or less excessive buying?

“Wag the Human: The Influence of Canine Personality on Human Relationship Satisfaction and Well-Being”
Lisa Cavanaugh, Duke University, USA
Hillary Leonard, University of Rhode Island, USA
Debra Scammon, University of Utah, USA

Animals hold a special place in the hearts of many people. Animals are far more than mere possessions; they are partners in close social relationships. We note the consumption investments that Americans make in pet-related products and services and argue that the importance of human-pet relationships might be driving some of these expenditures.

Drawing on research in personality, relationships, and well-being, the current project empirically examines how not only human but canine personalities shape human relationship satisfaction and well-being. Our research is one of a small number of cross-species studies of personality and, to our knowledge, the first to look at the interplay of personality facets across species as predictors of relationship satisfaction and well being.

We examine the similarity between the personalities of humans and their dogs, the role that dogs’ personalities play in relationship satisfaction, and relationship characteristics (such as closeness and length of relationship) that impact the human partner’s well-being. We employ one of the most widely used methods of assessing human personality (Gattis et al. 2004) the Big Five Inventory (BFI; John and Srivastava 1999) as well as a canine analog to the BFI, the BFI-canine (Gosling, Kwan and John 2003) to measure dog personalities. Human well-being was assessed using a satisfaction with life scale measure (Pavot and Diener 1993). To assess human satisfaction with the human-dog relationship we modified a widely used measure of relationship satisfaction (Rusbult 1983). To assess closeness in the human-dog relationship we used a measure of perceived overlap, the Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) Scale (Aron, Aron and Smollan 1992) to capture a general sense of people’s feelings of interconnectedness with their dogs.

We replicate some findings from the human relationship literature yet identify several unique aspects of the bond between humans and dogs that may offer insight into some unresolved issues in the literature on relationships and well-being. The human relationship literature suggests that personality plays an important role in determining satisfaction with one’s close relationships. In our research, we found that two of the dog’s personality facets, openness and agreeableness, were both significant contributors to explaining relationship satisfaction, while the personality of the human contributed little.

Research suggests that satisfying relationships enhance well-being (Diener et al. 1999; Lent et al. 2005) and that human well-being is improved by relationships with pets (see Brown 2004; Holbrook et al. 2001, Serpell 2003). Research also suggests that, in human relationships, the quality of a relationship is likely to change over time. A relationship may be satisfying initially but become less satisfying as time goes by (Karney and Bradbury 1995). Based on our overlap measure (Inclusion of Other in Self), our data suggest that sense of closeness and length of ownership may combine in unique ways to predict well-being. Regression analysis revealed a significant positive relationship with well-being for length of ownership and a significant interaction between length of ownership and overlap of self with dog. Our findings suggest a possible departure from what is known of close relationships in the human psychology literature. Whereas, over time people may become disenchanted with their human relationships, deriving less of their well-being from such relationships, over time their relationship with their ever-loyal dogs appear to enhance their well-being, providing much needed stability, comfort, and security. Our findings suggest that a greater understanding of intimacy may be gained by looking more closely at the life stage of relationship partners in conjunction with length of relationship. Future research may focus on understanding why these relationship satisfaction trajectories differ.

Our research demonstrates the significant role of canine personalities in humans’ satisfaction with their human-dog relationships. It also establishes the importance of pets to humans’ well-being. We find evidence that dogs do indeed “wag their humans” and we contend that insights about relationships and well-being gained by studying pets can lead to better understanding of humans.

“Consumer Behavior, Extended Self and Sacred Consumption: An Alternative Perspective from our Animal Companions”
Ronald Hill, University of South Florida, USA
Jeannie Gaines, University of South Florida, USA
R. Mark Wilson, University of South Florida, USA

The belief that living a dog’s life is some form of inhumane punishment or a lower form of existence has changed dramatically
over the decades. Mendelson (1998, p. S3) states: “No longer is Fido or Fifi just an animal that sits by the kitchen table waiting for scraps of food. Now, the household pet has worked its way up the family tree, in some cases even winning a coveted seat at the dinner table.” The consumer behavior concept of the extended self (Belk 1988) provides one explanation for understanding the consumption relationship between pet owners and their animal companions. Other researchers find that consumers buy pets to satisfy social needs, providing evidence that domestication of animals has more to do with companionship with other species than protection or other utilitarian purposes (Hirschman 1994; Endenburg et al. 1994). Pets also play the role of friend or partner, providing unconditional and nonjudgmental love for owners.

The research of Holbrook and his colleagues (2001) eschews the extended self paradigm to understanding our exchange relationships with animal companions. Their primary concern is that some scholars interpret these relationships as a means to ends such as enhancement of self-identity, failing to recognize the intimate bonds between parties that are best characterized as ends in themselves. Nonetheless, Belk (1988, p. 155) reinforces this long-term viewpoint when he asserts that the attitude of pet owners is “love me, love my dog.” Therefore, the extended self includes interspecies love and may involve a fusion of identities, allowing for a commitment that impacts the emotional fulfillment of pet owners and their animal companions. This research suggests that the relationship between human and nonhuman animals is best characterized as an experience that transcends ordinary consumer behavior to that of sacred consumption.

Our purpose is to report on a unique way of capturing the consumptive lives of animal companions based on the extended self/sacred consumption paradigms. This study uses self reflections. Our examination of canine consumption begins with essays written by three principal investigators, chronicling the lifecycle of their dogs from birth through puppy hood and until death. These essays were from memory and involved the use of preserved and cherished items such as photographs, collars and leashes, chew toys, and ashes to stimulate thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Each testimony was developed independently and projected the voice of the particular animal so that the anthropomorphic style of the storyteller would be reflective of his or her dog’s personality, behavior, and expressions.

Our findings indicate that pet owners possess a grasp on the consumption requirements and expectations of animal companions. Thus, firms with a mission to serve pets may gain market share and goodwill by using thematic categories such as those revealed by this research during product development. For example, initial engagement and selection decision reveal the well-intentioned yet naïve processes owners employ in their earliest interactions with and selection protocols for their canines. Given the consequences of such decisions, breeders and other pet suppliers would be wise to help customers craft more sophisticated purchase strategies to ensure loving choices.

The second theme of early adjustment and relationship development recounts attempts on both sides of this sacred consumption to integrate animal companions into households. The excitement of this period may exacerbate emotional states associated with novel experiences, suggesting the need for providers to help owners become aware of adjustment issues and coping mechanisms for themselves and their animal companions. The third theme, permanent bonds and loving intimacy, shows that trepidation gives way to integration of pets into families. As described previously, these bonds are based on the establishment of regular schedules and forms of interaction that meet needs beyond owners’ original expectations. Pet suppliers facilitate bond formation by supporting growth of routines and modes of interspecies communication.

The fourth theme of special events and life transitions demonstrates how animal companions come to represent the best of times and the most difficult moments in our lives. While some providers market products linked to positive occasions, few help pets and their owners navigate difficult transitions such as job changes, cross-country moves, and divorces. A poignant example is captured by the final theme parting is such sweet sorrow, which chronicles the aging and final days of our pets’ lives. While health care providers such as psychologists and veterinarians recognize the important role dogs play in our day-to-day worlds, their advice usually fails to help owners grieve, repair, and recover from such losses. Teaching pet owners how to recognize end-of-life situations and develop their own mourning and coping processes would be a positive step forward.

“Dog and Dog Owner Relationship in Consumer Behavior”
Tony Ellson, Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University, UK
Arch Woodside, Boston College, USA

Introduction: Memories reflect “a source of human amusement and a source of and vehicle for folk wisdom” (Belk 1996, p.125) and shape an essential ingredient of family culture and folklore. A dog’s charm and character emanate from recalled behaviors, behaviors that some might consider odd or eccentric, trivial, possibly anti-social and even unacceptable by human standards. Yet, it is these same behaviors that invoke hilarity, affection and joy within the family. No one is under any obligation to own a pet but “the remarkable affection and rapport” that exists between humans and pets “just to keep me company” (Holbrook 1996, p.165) and the common notion that pets are “good for people” or as “medicine” (Belk 1996, p.122) are strong motivators for having a dog.

Study—Death of a dog: Hilly became ill over a relatively short period of time. She stopped eating and gradually she drank less and less. She had leukemia. Her last days and her death are described in the paper as well as the family decision of what to do with her remains, and the thoughts and feelings about Hilly after she had passed away.

Theory implications: The concept of dog ownership implies an unequal relationship. Unlike a child, a dog does not become independent and leave home. There is a clear line between an owner’s property and a dog’s property, what a dog is allowed to do and what a dog is not allowed to do, what is acceptable behavior and what is not. This will vary between dog owners, their values and expectations. Dogs are supposed to adapt to our expectations and they do so willingly. The dog in the role of surrogate child notionally develops a superego as the result of prohibitions and demands throughout life. This outcome is the result of external power and authority of the dog owner whether through formal training or informal demands. It can represent the owner’s striving for perfection through prohibitive restrictions. These restrictions are both protective and punitive and represent the moral values of the dog owner.

Dog owners internalize and determine a perception of an ideal relationship between themselves and the dog providing a unique opportunity to mould the instinctual needs and drives of their charges to harmonize with their own ego. Dog ownership enables the development of an existential id within the ego of a dog owning relationship. Primitive and instinctive cognitive processes are instructed by an affective state that represses the development of ego at an early stage in the bonding between owner and dog. No prohibitive superego develops to govern the behavior of the pet dog...
because it remains dependent on primitive cognitive functions within the domestic environment. This dependency enables the dog owner to internalize an ideal through the exercise of superego control of the dog without the constraints of time, maturity, mobility, economic independence, and loss of control even to the time and manner of death.

Dog ownership is in part an expression of idealism, a perception of lifestyle, perhaps the way we wish to be seen. We make an implicit covenant with our pets in return for enrichment of and benefit to our life that is the consequence of a mutual exchange between owner and pet. Pets can be troublesome, time consuming, unpredictable, difficult, and hard work. Most of the time, however, they offer a very rewarding experience that augments the lives of those in close proximity. This relationship personifies the relationship between supplier and customer.

The role pets play in our lives is a vital facet in marketing pet and pet-related products. The role of the superego in the relationship between dog and dog owner is an aspect of consumer behavior that explicates the need for businesses to match pet products through values and emotions rather than silly slogans and rational appeals. Suppliers should take into account the potential strength of the dog owners’ internalized view of their relationship with their dog.
This roundtable was held in order to continue discussions on the topic of Transformative Consumer Research. The roundtable focused on how consumer research could be directed toward making beneficial differences in the lives of consumers.

David Mick, in his Report on the Task Force on Transformative Consumer Research (TCR), describes the mission of TCR as making “…a beneficial difference in the lives of consumers, both present and future generations, through the chosen focus and conduct of specific research, and in the communicating of its implications and usefulness.” More simply stated, TCR is “…consumer research in the service of quality of life.” (Mick 2006, pg. 3)

An initial task force and a 12-member TCR advisory committee have identified substantive topics for TCR, outlined strategies for disseminating research results to consumers, and identified organisations to collaborate and to fund TCR projects. While TCR as an organised group of scholars is a nascent movement within ACR, research grounded in the idea of consumer well-being has a history in consumer literature. Examples of extant TCR research include (but are not limited to) topics such as immigration (Peneloza 1994), poverty (Hill 2002), consumer vulnerability (Baker, Gentry, and Rittenburg, 2005), and consumption and illiteracy (Viswanathan and Gau 2005; Adkins, et al. 2005).

The dialogue initiated by the task force and by the advisory committee provides a framework and some strategic options for moving the relevance of consumer research findings closer to the consumer. However, this dialogue has been localised to the North American ACR conferences. The need for TCR exists worldwide and issues specific to the European domain need to be discussed in greater detail. A number of European researchers are actively engaged in TCR (such as those who attended this roundtable) and further collaboration and dialogue is necessary to better understand how the European context may facilitate or hinder TCR.

A number of distinguished guests attended the session, including the Chair, Darach Turley, Lisa Peneloza, Linda Scott, Alladi Venkatesh, and Soren, Askegaard. In total over 55 people attended the roundtable, an excellent response for a conference of this size.

The purpose of the TCR roundtable was twofold: 1) to initiate a dialogue on Transformative Consumer Research within the EACR community and 2) to bring to light factors that facilitate and factors that constrain research designed for and directly conveyed to consumers. Particular questions were presented in the roundtable; however, discussion flowed organically along two main paths.

**Definitional Aspects of TCR**

Early discussion focused on what Transformative Consumer Research actually represents in the minds of the attendees. Some saw it as a subfield of Social Marketing, whilst others saw it as a philosophical view of how research is to be initiated, conducted and disseminated back to its intended audience.

**The Importance of TCR**

None who participated in the roundtable argued as to the importance of the work that Transformative Consumer Researchers were undertaking, but rather why, as marketers, we feel we have a responsibility to conduct such research. Some of the comments included why we feel we have the right to enact change in consumers’ lives, why we feel we are able to make such changes and how such research can be used to benefit the researcher through publications, but also whether it actually has any impact on the target consumers.

These discussions continue to take place online at www.e- tcr.blogspot.com and we invite existing and new Transformative Consumer Researchers to engage with the discussion.

We hope that all attendees found value in the session and wish you all the best in your future work in Transformative Consumer Research.

**Key References**


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the conditions under which people can correct the effects of arousal experienced during judgment. Specifically, it investigates how motivation and judgment mode (memory- or stimulus-based judgment) interact to affect people’s tendency to correct the influence of unrelated emotional arousal on judgment of brands.

Research on mental contamination, correction and discounting suggests several factors that may affect correction (Wilson and Brekke 1994; Schul and Burnstein 1985; Schul and Mazursky 1990). Two factors discussed in the literature serve as the basis for our conceptualization. The first is related to the timing of processing of the discounting context relative to encoding of the information. According to Schul and colleagues, if the discounting information is presented prior to encoding of other information, it might be easier to discount the irrelevant information; if the discounting information is presented after encoding, it might be more difficult to discount the irrelevant information. This argument suggests that when considering the effect of arousal experienced during judgment on correction, there might be differences between conditions of memory-based judgment and stimulus-based judgment. Under stimulus-based judgment (compared to memory-based judgment), aroused people might have more difficulties separating their arousal from the rest of the information. In memory-based judgment, because the encoding of judgment target information and the experienced arousal take place at different points in time, it might be easier to filter out the arousal from the judgment. The second factor in the basis of our conceptualization is motivation. Researchers suggest that to permit discounting, people should be motivated to render accurate judgment (e.g., Wilson and Brekke 1994; Schul and Burnstein 1985). Based on these two factors we propose that:

H1: Arousal, mode of judgment, and motivation, will interact to affect people’s judgment and ability to correct their judgment.

H2a: In memory-based judgment, under high motivation, arousal experienced during judgment will not affect judgment.

H2b: In memory-based judgment, under low motivation, arousal experienced during judgment will affect judgment.

H3: In stimulus-based judgment, under both high and low motivation, arousal will affect judgment.

Method

The effect of arousal on judgment and correction was examined using a 2 (arousal: moderate vs. high) x 2 (motivation: low vs. high) x 2 (mode of judgment: memory- vs. stimulus-based judgment) fully between-subject design. The dependent variable was attitude toward a brand (Abr), which participants learned about from an ad presented to them. Participants were 438 undergraduate students in introductory courses in business at a Midwestern university; they participated in the experiment in exchange for extra credit points.

Arousal was manipulated using music. Based on pretesting, we chose two pieces: Binary Finary by Ricky Grant for the high arousal condition and Closing Time by Tom Waits for the moderate arousal condition.

To manipulate the participants’ motivation, we used an accuracy goal procedure (Maheswaran and Sternthal 1990). Participants in the high motivation condition were told that the study was related to a company’s market research, and that their evaluation would be heavily weighed in the company’s decision. For the low motivation condition, participants were asked to complete a scale about their attitude toward the brand as a part of pilot testing.

Mode of judgment was manipulated as follows. In the stimulus-based conditions, participants were asked to complete a scale to measure their attitude toward the ad while viewing the ad. In the memory-based condition, participants participated in a two-session experiment which consisted of encoding and judgment sessions. We used several procedures described in the literature to ensure that people only encoded information in the first session without forming any judgment (Lichtenstein and Srull 1987).

The judgment target was the brand presented in an ad, measured on a four-item scale, with seven points for each item (Miniard et al. 1991).

Results

ANOVA revealed significant interaction between arousal, motivation and judgment mode to affect Abr ($F(1, 422)=3.98$, $p<.05$). Moreover, under conditions of memory-based judgment, arousal had a significant effect on Abr only under low motivation condition ($p(2-tail)<.05$). The effect of arousal on Abr under condition of high motivation was insignificant ($p(2-tail)=.7$). Interestingly, the results under stimulus-based judgment reveal an opposite pattern. Under conditions of stimulus based judgment, arousal had a significant effect on Abr only under high motivation ($p(2-tail)<.1$). The effect of arousal on Abr under conditions of low motivation was insignificant ($p(2-tail)=.8$).

Discussion and Conclusion

Results of the study support all hypotheses with one exception. In stimulus-based judgment under low motivation, arousal did not have impact on people’s attitude toward the brand. One alternative explanation may be related to the effect of people’s motivation. According to Stapel, Kooman, and Zeelenberg (1998), if participants are more motivated to think, we will see an enhanced effect on judgment. In contrast, when they do not think much about the judgment, we will be less likely to see an effect. Although this explanation might explain the pattern observed in stimulus-based judgment, it is inconsistent with the pattern observed under memory-based judgment.

Another explanation may be related to the mechanisms that govern the effects of arousal on judgment. It is possible that various mechanisms will dominate the effect of arousal on judgment under different conditions and that each of these mechanisms require different conditions for people to be able to correct their effect on judgment. Future research should examine the circumstances under which each of the processes for the effect of arousal on judgment take place and the nature of each of those mechanisms.
The Impact of Arousal on Judgment Correction

References


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Marketers sometimes present product related information in partitioned formats, whereby composite information is broken up into smaller, non-overlapping and conjunctive sub-groups. For instance, IMITREX® presents the results of their clinical trials in partitioned form as: 62% success rate in Study 1, 56% success rate in Study 2, and 57% success rate in Study 3. Similarly, the website of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) presents data in partitioned forms. For example, in their annual report on aircraft accident data, the FAA presents the total number of injuries aboard flights, partitioned into the “roles” of the injured as: of the total number of 23 serious injuries sustained aboard flights, 3 were flight crew, 9 were cabin crew, and 11 were passengers (www.ntsb.gov/publictn/2006/ARC0602.pdf).

The present research extends prior literature by examining scenarios of how different levels of partitioned information (e.g., 3 vs. 5 levels), are evaluated differentially based on how the information is presented to respondents, i.e., if they are presented jointly or side by side, versus they are presented separately one scenario at a time. In our experimental scenarios, we mimicked the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s crash tests with dummies to estimate the probability of injury to a real person in that crash. Participants were given description of the process for testing frontal collisions (crash-test dummies are placed in the driver seat, secured with the vehicle’s seat belts, and the vehicles are then crashed into a fixed barrier at 40 miles per hour) and told about the results about three tests centers and/or five test centers. For example, in the three test center condition (3 levels of partition), 200 dummies were tested with Car X at each center with resulting injuries to 40, 46, and 34 dummies. In the five test center condition (5 levels of partition), 120 dummies were tested at each center with Car Y with resulting injuries to 24, 30, 20, 25, and 21 dummies. Thus, across the different partition levels, the average performance of Car X and Car Y was identical (20% injury levels for both cars). In the so-called joint-evaluation conditions, one group evaluated the performance of both Car X and Car Y (they saw both pieces of information); in the separate evaluation conditions, one group evaluated Car X while another group evaluated Car Y (each group saw one piece of information).

Theoretically speaking, when the two partitions are evaluated separately, the number of injuries is hard to evaluate (Bazerman et al. 1992; Hsee 1996, 2000). However, the number of partitions may be easier to evaluate with a 5-level partitioning evoking judgments of greater perceived magnitude (Numerosity heuristic, Pelham 1994), more so a 5 is an independently prominent number (Albers 2001). The prediction, therefore, is that in separate evaluations, the perceived likelihood of having serious injuries is higher with Car Y (5 partitions) relative to Car X (3 partitions). However, while the numerosity and prominence heuristics can sufficiently explain the differential judgment across the 5 versus 3 partition levels when the information is evaluated separately (between-subjects), it would be inadequate to provide a conceptual framework for evaluations made in the joint mode (within-subjects). For example, when the information is presented side by side, careful information processing should show that the two partitions are equivalent at the aggregate (same number of injuries), or have comparable proportions across the test centers (17% to 23% across the 3 test centers; 17% to 25% across the 5 test centers). However, a more cursory information processing might give the impression that there are fewer injuries (e.g., mostly in the 20’s) in the 5-partition condition than in the 3 partition condition (e.g., in the 30’s and 40’s).

Therefore, our prediction is that the perceived likelihood of having serious injuries is either the same across Cars X (3 partitions) and Y (5 partitions) when they are presented separately, or lower with Car Y (5 partitions) relative to Car X (3 partitions) when they are presented together.

Eighty-seven undergraduate participants (average age=21.2 years, and 40.2% female) were randomly assigned to the three experimental conditions: (1) Joint evaluations (3 and 5 partitions), (2) Separate evaluations (3 partition only), and (3) Separate evaluations (5 partitions only). Depending upon the conditions, they judged the probability of having serious injuries in a crash while driving Car X and Car Y, or only Car X, or only Car Y based on two questions: (1) If you get into an accident while driving Car X (Car Y), how probable do you think that you would have serious injuries? (Rate on a scale of 0 to 100, where 0= Not Likely at All; 100= Highly Likely); (2) On a scale of 0 to 100, how would you rate your chances of having serious injuries if you have an accident while driving Car X (Car Y)? (0= Not At All Likely; 100= Certain). Coefficient alpha was .75 in the separate-evaluate conditions, and .88 in the joint-evaluation condition.

The results show that, in the separate-evaluation conditions, participants had a higher probability judgment of getting car crash injury for the 5-level than for the 3-level partitioning (M=37.73 vs. 28.87; t(53)=2.13, p<.05). In contrast, in the joint-evaluation condition, participants had lower probability judgment of getting car crash injury for the 5-level than for the 3-level partitioning (M=28.62 vs. 33.72; t(31)=2.34, p<.05). The implication is that consumer probability judgments for partitioned information can be influenced by the evaluation mode. For example, while IMITREX® presents clinical trial results with only three levels of partitions (Studies 1-3), RELPAX® presents their data with seven levels of partitions (Studies 1-7). How consumers come across the information (e.g., jointly, in the same issue of a magazine), or separately (e.g., billboards) might affect their perceptions of the efficacy of the drugs.

References
A Typology of Individual Search Strategies Among High-Income Investors in the United States: An Exploratory Study

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ABSTRACT

This paper contributes to previous research on consumer search patterns and lends additional empirical evidence to support the existence of such patterns. It suggests that there is considerable similarity in the search behaviors of certain groups of investors as well as significant distance between the groups to warrant cluster analysis. We use a novel survey of high-income investors in the U.S. to present a framework that integrates and suggests demographic, socio-economic, and psychological explanation for observed patterns of search. The different levels of involvement in the investment decision are used to apply the framework in a managerially relevant manner.

INTRODUCTION

“Information search is essential in making a wise choice” (Guo 2001, p. 505). Few will doubt that this statement is true for making investment decisions. According to the economics of information theory one must assume that the more information the investor has, the better decision he/she will make (Kulwat, Guo, and Engschandl 2004). The complexity of information search and its managerial implications make the understanding of consumers’ information-search behavior critical for both marketers and consumer advocates (Moorthy, Ratchford, and Talukdar 1997). Better knowledge of the investment search behaviors of different groups of investors will also mean that the effects of changes in a person’s financial environment on search strategy and investor performance can be studied in a more meaningful manner. A prominent example in the U.S. is the ongoing changes in retirement plans, e.g., the new offering of ROTH 401(k) plans, that require the individual investor’s scrutiny.

In previous research, little attention has been directed to analyzing investor information search patterns and to using these to study investment decision making. In fact, the distinct characteristic of investments, intangible goods purchased on future, predicted value, has placed them outside the mainstream literature on consumer external search (Lin and Lee 2004). A recent literature review documents that most external search studies focused on durable goods, such as automobiles and electronics, and points toward the need for a comprehensive framework addressing consumer information search for tangible, intangible goods and services (Guo 2001). The high-ticket and high-consequence nature of investment decisions hereby warrants increased attention. The present paper seeks to fill this void with an exploratory, cross-sectional study of U.S. investors’ information-search behavior. In particular, we assess three aspects of investor information search. First, we expect different groups of investors to exhibit different information strategies. For instance, different demographic groups may use different information strategies based on experience and familiarity (Peterson and Merino 2003). Second, we also expect personality differences to explain variations in information strategies. These psychological and sociological variables have been identified in the savings behavior literature (Gunnarson and Wahlund 1997; Meier, Kirchler, and Christian-Hubert 1999). We suggest that investor typologies could be formed for the investment decision-making as well. Finally, we expect that information search patterns, their demographic, socio-economic and psychological predictors influence the individual investor’s involvement in the investment decision.

The remaining article is divided into four sections. First, we briefly review literature on external information search behavior and its relevance for the present study. Second, we introduce cluster analysis as our means of grouping search strategies. Third, we describe how participants in a survey of high-income investors in the U.S. responded to questions about their information search behavior. Finally, we conclude with a brief discussion of our findings. Based on our current timeline we fully expect that even more comprehensive analyses will be available for presentation at the conference in July.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In this section we discuss research on investor information search and its relevance for the present study. We first briefly touch on the economic theory of search which is the standard framework applied by economists in studies of information search behavior. We argue that the analysis of information search strategies for intangible goods, such as investments, contributes significantly to the understanding of consumer external search processes.

Consumer information search behavior encompasses both internal and external information search. By definition, internal information search involves memory and occurs prior to external information search. External information search refers to everything but memory when searching for information (Peterson and Merino 2003; Guo 2001). External information search thus includes the gathering of investment information. This particular information search matches the definition of external search as (1) consisting of pre-acquisition, goal-directed behavior and (2) continuous activities (Peterson and Merino 2003). Information search is deeply rooted in the economic theory of search. It states, in a nutshell, that consumers weigh the costs and benefits of search when making search decisions (Moorthy, Ratchford, and Talukdar 1997). With respect to the information search for investment decisions, we interpret benefit and cost quite narrowly in that benefit increases with the variety of information sources and the frequency of its use. Cost can be difficulty of search or emotional burdens attached to the investment search task. In the present study, we control for cost with a number of psychological variables. Following Gunnarson and Wahlund (1997), patterns of investors’ information search may be viewed as expressing some sort of “information strategy,” whether consciously or unconsciously practiced. An information strategy is hereby defined as the observed pattern within a group of investors of different types of information sources and their frequency of use.

Only few studies examine consumers’ search for financial information. The most pertinent source is a study by Lin and Lee (2004). They used regression analysis to identify a number of predictor variables, e.g., subjective knowledge, amount of investments, risk tolerance, age, education, and income, related with both type and variety of sources of investment information. Subsequent analysis showed that the influence of the predictor variables varied with respect to the type of information source. Overall, there is very little research on consumer search for economic/financial information. This is the more surprising, considering the importance of
making wise financial decisions, in particular investment decisions, in our society and the many unfortunate decisions we observe in this regard. In particular, the literature on making investment decisions for one’s retirement documents the need for a better understanding of investor information search behavior (Beshears et al. 2006; Madrian and Shea 2001; Thaler and Benartzi 2004).

**METHOD**

**A unique data set**

The present study presents first analyses of a newly collected, nationally-representative sample of investors in the U.S. The survey researched investors who live in households with annual household income of $75,000 and higher. In particular, it interviewed the one household member “who is the most knowledgeable about saving and investing.” The survey was conducted by phone from October 2005 to February 2006. A total of 911 interviews were completed. Participants were paid $20 for their assistance.

**Measures**

**Information sources.** The type of information sources and the frequency of its use were measured with the question, “How often have you obtained information about investing from [source]?” Responses were rated on a five-point scale ranging from never=1 to very often=5. Information sources included five internet-based sources (general internet search; internet trading; market watch websites; investment analysis or management software; email investment newsletters); three mass-media sources (newspapers, magazines, newsletters, or books; TV programs; radio programs); four interpersonal sources (friends or colleagues; classes or workshops; investment clubs; financial advisor); and workplace-based sources.

**Demographic and socio-economic variables.** Gender (male=1), race (white=1), marital status (married=1), and education (B.Sc. and higher=1) were coded as 0/1 binary variables. Age, annual household income, and total financial assets entered the analyses as continuous variables. Overall, more men than women agreed to participate in the phone survey. The majority of the respondents were in their forties and fifties, white, married, and held a college degree. Most respondents worked full-time, typically in professional, business and finance management, or technical positions. While the largest single income group was “$200,000 and higher,” half of the sample reported an annual household income below $120,000. On average, respondents reported total household assets of $1,139,477 and financial obligations of $232,767.

**Psychological variables.** The influence of psychological factors on investor information search was measured by the following two questions. First, “Now I will read several statements about investing. Please tell me whether you strongly disagree, disagree, agree, or strongly agree with each of them.” The statements included: (a) investing is exciting; (b) investing is satisfying; (c) investing is time-consuming; (d) I am confident about my ability to invest; and (e) I am knowledgeable about investing. Secondly, “These next statements relate to general beliefs about finances. Please tell me whether you strongly disagree, disagree, agree, or strongly agree with each of them.” The statements included: (a) I am responsible for my own financial well-being; (b) I like to plan for my financial future; (c) I carefully review the financial information I receive in the mail; (d) I maximize contributions to my retirement accounts; (e) I wish I did not have to handle financial responsibilities; and (f) I have a clear idea of what my financial needs will be during retirement. The responses to both questions were rated on a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree=1 to strongly agree=5.

**RESULTS**

We included the thirteen information sources variables in the cluster analysis. The five-cluster solution proved the best solution. It included statistically significant, high F values in the ANOVA (see Table 1), satisfying distances between final cluster centers ranging from 2.297 to 5.642, and an iteration history reaching an endpoint at the 18th iteration.

Based on the results presented in the Section 4.1 below, we identified the following five clusters:

1. **Cluster 1** (98 respondents; 10.8% of the analyzed investors): practicing a broad high-information strategy. These investors are highly information driven and use a diversified information strategy. Their main sources are internet searches and advice given by financial advisors. In addition, they use seven other media on a “sometimes” basis. The cluster’s mean information gathering score is 2.915 (SD: 1.030). The score is based on a five-point scale ranging from never=1 to very often=5).

2. **Cluster 2** (98 respondents; 10.8% of the analyzed investors): practicing a narrow high-information strategy. These investors are highly information driven. In contrast to Cluster 1, they base their information search on the internet and its services, such as internet searches, internet trading,
market watch websites, and analysis software. This cluster has the highest number of “often” responses. Its mean information gathering score is 2.557 (SD: .970).

3. **Cluster 3** (234 respondents; 25.8% of the analyzed investors): practicing an intermediate information strategy. These investors gather information from the internet, newspapers, and financial advisors, but on a less frequent basis than the high-information clusters. The cluster’s mean information gathering score is 2.041 (SD: .905).

4. **Cluster 4** (213 respondents; 23.5% of the analyzed investors): practicing a broad low-information strategy. The workplace, mass media, friends and colleagues, and financial advisors are their information sources but these sources are only infrequently used. The cluster’s mean information gathering score is 1.970 (SD: .811).

5. **Cluster 5** (264 respondents; 29.1% of the analyzed investors): practicing a narrow low-information strategy. These investors gather very little information about investing. Their major information source is financial advisors. The cluster’s mean information gathering score is 1.446 (SD: .640), the lowest of the five clusters.

**Summary of results**

To structure the analysis, the different information sources were a priori split into four different groups: internet-based information sources, mass-media information sources, interpersonal information sources, and workplace-based information sources. This split is similar to others employed by Lin and Lee (2004) and Blinder and Krueger (2004). Already at this aggregated level, some patterns can be discerned. Internet-based information sources are dominant at the two high-information strategies. They show mean information scores of 3.3 (Cluster 1) and 3.5 (Cluster 2) compared to an information score for this medium of 2.0 of all respondents. Respondents in Cluster 5 show the lowest information scores across all information sources, ranking from a mean score of 1.8 for interpersonal sources to 1.2 for internet-based sources. The third stand-out is Cluster 4 which shows above-average mean scores for interpersonal (2.2) and workplace-based (3.2) information sources. Not surprisingly, the four groups of information sources are used by almost all respondents. What seems to characterize Cluster 2, however, is the extremely high use of self-directed learning sources combined with an extremely low use of interpersonal and workplace-based sources. In Table 2 we can verify that such is the case: Cluster 2 investors have a much higher information score gradient (1.8979) than the other clusters. The two high-information clusters use the internet-based information sources twice as often as the two low-information clusters. Similarly, Cluster 4 investors use workplace-based information sources twice as often as, for instance, the low-communicative Clusters 2 and 3 as well as the low-information Cluster 5.

**Detailed results**

**Internet-based information sources**

The internet-based information sources include general web searches, information services, such as market watch websites and email investment newsletters, and instruments, such as investment analysis or management software and internet trading sites. Most respondents in the sample do not use the internet-based information sources (cf. Table 3). The mode for all respondents is “never” for these sources. Despite this result, the clusters vary widely in their use of the internet to gather investment information. Cluster 2 investors use it most frequently of all clusters. While their favorite source is the internet search (mean score: 3.98), they equally use market watch websites, software, and trading. Cluster 1 investors are second in the use of web-based sources. Cluster 3 investors “sometimes” use the general internet search and the low-information clusters do not use these sources at all.

**Mass-media information sources**

The detailed breakdown in Table 4 shows that print publications, such as newspapers, magazines, newsletters, or books, are the most popular mass-media product for this sample of high-income investors. TV and radio programs are of very little use for all but Cluster 1. Except for Cluster 5 investors, who make very little use of the mass-media sources, the print media are equally popular among the four other clusters.

**Interpersonal information sources**

A look at different forms of interpersonal information sources within the five clusters in Table 5 confirms the earlier signs that they vary in their use of friends or colleagues, classes or workshops, investment clubs, and the financial advisor to gather investment information.

The financial advisor is an important information source for Cluster 1 in addition to the use of the internet. The combination of both information sources provides the richest information condition of the five clusters because it is based on both internal, personal knowledge and external advice (Sniezek and Buckley 1995). Sniezek and Buckley (1995) describe the opposite extreme of this situation as the “dependent” condition. The term matches the low-information cluster where low personal knowledge is combined with expert advisors. The knowledge asymmetry between these investors and their advisors characterizes their information gathering. Investment clubs, classes or workshops play negligible role for investors.

**Workplace-based information sources**

Two clusters, Cluster 1 and 4, are the ones that take advantage of employer-sponsored investor education (cf. Table 2). In particular, Cluster 4 investors are characterized by an information strategy that is based, in this order, on the workplace, financial advisor, friends and colleagues.

**Differentiating variables**

It was solely data about the information sources that produced the cluster solution presented in Section 4.2. The detailed analysis appears to point towards five different groups with quite distinct information search strategies. The following paragraphs examine demographic, socio-economic, psychological, and investor-involvement related similarities and differences between the clusters’ information behaviors.

**Demographic and socio-economic variables**

Table 6 shows that the clusters differ most significantly by gender, education, and household income. They are also, but less significantly, influenced by age, total financial assets, race and employment status. Marital status, family size, number of adults, occupation, and financial obligations did not differ between the clusters.

The high-information clusters exhibit the highest portion of men. 84 percent of Cluster 2 and 75 percent of Cluster 1 were men compared to 58 percent of Cluster 4 and 57 percent of Cluster 5. The two high-information clusters also had the highest number of minority respondents (Cluster 1: 19%, Cluster 2: 23%) compared to the lower information clusters, and the highest level of education. Eighty-eight percent of Cluster 2 and 84 percent of Cluster 1 investors had a bachelor’s degree or more compared to only 66 percent of Cluster 5. Cluster 1 further stands out with respect to the highest number of professionals (68%), the highest household income ($138,900) and wealth accumulation ($1.593m). Cluster 2
is characterized by the largest proportion of male respondents (84%), minority respondents (23%), married respondents (96%) and the highest educational background (88% with B.S. or higher). Cluster 5, on the other hand, exhibits the highest number of women respondents (43%), the oldest respondents (49.93 years of age), the fewest minority respondents (11%), the lowest educational background (66% with B.S. or higher), and the lowest household income ($114,000) of all clusters. Their wealth accumulation was higher than in Cluster 4 ($1,096,000 vs. $874,000). The findings suggest that the two high-information clusters are characterized by a larger portion of male respondents, minority respondents, married respondents, higher educational background, professional occupations, higher annual household income and wealth accumulation compared to the two low-information clusters.

Analyses comparing the loadings of the clusters in a pairwise manner and testing for any significant differences among them provide additional insight (data available on request). Means analyses exhibit significantly different proportions of men and women, different educational backgrounds, and a different racial composition in seven of the ten comparison groups. Six cluster combination

**TABLE 1**

Cluster centers for investor information sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information sources</th>
<th>Cluster 1</th>
<th>Cluster 2</th>
<th>Cluster 3</th>
<th>Cluster 4</th>
<th>Cluster 5</th>
<th>F Tests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General internet search</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>343.696***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet trading</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>245.779***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market watch websites</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>219.335***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>177.237***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment analysis or management software</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>174.805***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers, magazines, newsletters, or books</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>109.826***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email investment newsletters</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>107.597***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends or colleagues</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>62.074***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV programs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>55.603***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classes or workshops</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>43.096***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio programs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40.734***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial advisor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27.269***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment clubs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16.586***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of sources (SD)</td>
<td>2.915</td>
<td>2.557</td>
<td>2.041</td>
<td>1.970</td>
<td>1.446</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1.030)</td>
<td>(.970)</td>
<td>(.905)</td>
<td>(.811)</td>
<td>(.640)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety of sources (N=13)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N (=908)</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(99)</td>
<td>(98)</td>
<td>(234)</td>
<td>(213)</td>
<td>(264)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Variables were coded on a five-point scale: never=1, seldom=2, sometimes=3, often=4, very often=5; mp<.10, *p<.05, **p<.005, ***p<.001

**TABLE 2**

Information scores of the clusters by information source

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clusters</th>
<th>Internet-based</th>
<th>Mass-media</th>
<th>Interpersonal</th>
<th>Workplace</th>
<th>Δ Max/Min</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mean (SD)</td>
<td>mean (SD)</td>
<td>mean (SD)</td>
<td>mean (SD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 1</td>
<td>3.2909 (.61761)</td>
<td>2.6532 (.78089)</td>
<td>2.6742 (.54099)</td>
<td>2.7778 (1.01575)</td>
<td>.6377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 2</td>
<td>3.5306 (.52414)</td>
<td>2.3163 (.67753)</td>
<td>1.7526 (.41631)</td>
<td>1.6327 (.85419)</td>
<td>1.8979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 3</td>
<td>2.1171 (.43590)</td>
<td>2.2450 (.60026)</td>
<td>1.9049 (.45245)</td>
<td>1.5983 (.77581)</td>
<td>.6467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 4</td>
<td>1.6094 (.43427)</td>
<td>1.8232 (.50420)</td>
<td>2.2289 (.45831)</td>
<td>3.1737 (.78480)</td>
<td>1.5643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 5</td>
<td>1.2288 (.28619)</td>
<td>1.3712 (.42453)</td>
<td>1.7500 (.43438)</td>
<td>1.5417 (.71789)</td>
<td>.5212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All respondents</td>
<td>2.0184 (.91272)</td>
<td>1.9440 (.71435)</td>
<td>2.0022 (.54369)</td>
<td>2.0823 (1.06638)</td>
<td>.1383</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Variables were coded on a five-point scale: never=1, seldom=2, sometimes=3, often=4, very often=5;
differed by income. Most pronounced is here the income difference between Cluster 1 and 5 (-4.757, p=.000). Five cluster combinations further differed by age and wealth. The means analyses document the demographic and socio-economic differences of high- and low-information investors.

Psychological variables

Extant literature on consumer search has been based on psychological models of information processing using variables such as beliefs, attitudes, and perceived behavioral control (Moorthy, Ratchford, and Talukdar 1997; Beatty and Smith 1987). Some of the more important psychological variables that affected the investors of the present study are presented in Table 7. While the clusters did not differ much for the negative “investing is stressful” and “investing is difficult” measures, they diverge for the positive evaluation measures. The high-information investors find investing much more exciting and satisfying than the low-information counterparts. At the same time they consider investing quite time-consuming. Not surprisingly, the high-information investors felt more confident and knowledgeable about their skills.

These results suggest that attitudes, beliefs, and perceived control are significantly stronger for the high-information investors. The most salient beliefs of the investors affected their long-term investment planning. The high-information clusters felt more responsible for their own financial future, they liked to plan it and reported to have a clearer idea of their financial needs in retirement than the low-information investors. They are also the ones that belief in the benefits provided by careful reviews of their investment-related mail and maximization of retirement contributions. The information clusters were least likely to see investing as a burden that they wished not having to handle. The direct measures

### TABLE 3
Information scores for internet-based information sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clusters</th>
<th>Internet search mean (SD), mode</th>
<th>Market watch newsletters mean (SD), mode</th>
<th>Email newsletters mean (SD), mode</th>
<th>Investment software mean (SD), mode</th>
<th>Internet trading mean (SD), mode</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 1</td>
<td>3.72 (.980), 4</td>
<td>3.30 (1.111), 3</td>
<td>3.30 (1.120), 4</td>
<td>3.43 (1.071), 4</td>
<td>2.70 (1.191), 3</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 2</td>
<td>3.98 (.908), 4</td>
<td>3.70 (1.151), 5</td>
<td>2.61 (1.257), 2</td>
<td>3.68 (1.080), 4</td>
<td>3.67 (1.063), 4</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 3</td>
<td>2.93 (.896), 3</td>
<td>1.98 (1.052), 1</td>
<td>1.85 (.941), 1</td>
<td>1.97 (1.023), 1</td>
<td>1.86 (.994), 1</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 4</td>
<td>1.75 (.814), 1</td>
<td>1.45 (.785), 1</td>
<td>1.74 (.872), 1</td>
<td>1.87 (.975), 1</td>
<td>1.24 (.555), 1</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 5</td>
<td>1.30 (.564), 1</td>
<td>1.18 (.535), 1</td>
<td>1.28 (.602), 1</td>
<td>1.29 (.666), 1</td>
<td>1.09 (.332), 1</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All respondents</td>
<td>2.38 (1.274), 1</td>
<td>1.95 (1.244), 1</td>
<td>1.90 (1.096), 1</td>
<td>2.09 (1.240), 1</td>
<td>1.78 (1.147), 1</td>
<td>911</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 4
Information scores for mass-media information sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clusters</th>
<th>Print mean (SD), mode</th>
<th>Information Source TV mean (SD), mode</th>
<th>Radio mean (SD), mode</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 1</td>
<td>3.35 (.861), 3</td>
<td>2.34 (1.171), 2</td>
<td>2.26 (.975), 2</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 2</td>
<td>3.30 (1.017), 3</td>
<td>2.01 (1.030), 1</td>
<td>1.64 (.900), 1</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 3</td>
<td>3.18 (.874), 3</td>
<td>1.78 (.917), 1</td>
<td>1.78 (.973), 1</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 4</td>
<td>2.67 (.919), 3</td>
<td>1.38 (.659), 1</td>
<td>1.42 (.720), 1</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 5</td>
<td>1.78 (.872), 1</td>
<td>1.16 (.430), 1</td>
<td>1.18 (.506), 1</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All respondents</td>
<td>2.69 (1.096), 3</td>
<td>1.59 (.887), 1</td>
<td>1.56 (.860), 1</td>
<td>911</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Variables were coded on a five-point scale: never=1, seldom=2, sometimes=3, often=4, very often=5; mp<.10, *p<.05, **p<.005, ***p<.001
TABLE 5
Information scores for interpersonal information sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clusters</th>
<th>Information Source</th>
<th>Information Source</th>
<th>Information Source</th>
<th>Information Source</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friends or colleagues</td>
<td>Classes or workshops</td>
<td>Investment clubs</td>
<td>Financial advisor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mean (SD), mode</td>
<td>mean (SD), mode</td>
<td>mean (SD), mode</td>
<td>mean (SD), mode</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 1</td>
<td>2.88 (.961), 3</td>
<td>2.49 (.908), 2</td>
<td>1.71 (1.093), 1</td>
<td>3.59 (.937), 3</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 2</td>
<td>2.07 (.922), m</td>
<td>1.63 (.817), 1</td>
<td>1.26 (.597), 1</td>
<td>2.05 (1.019), 2</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 3</td>
<td>2.24 (.813), 2</td>
<td>1.69 (.808), 1</td>
<td>1.15 (.588), 1</td>
<td>2.54 (1.112), 3</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 4</td>
<td>2.89 (.744), 3</td>
<td>1.79 (.915), 1</td>
<td>1.28 (.703), 1</td>
<td>2.96 (1.094), 3</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 5</td>
<td>1.82 (.844), 1</td>
<td>1.31 (.538), 1</td>
<td>1.14 (.482), 1</td>
<td>2.74 (1.238), 2</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All respondents</td>
<td>2.32 (.941), 3</td>
<td>1.68 (.850), 1</td>
<td>1.25 (.685), 1</td>
<td>2.76 (1.183), 3</td>
<td>911</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ² Statistics

245.440*** 155.278*** 84.441*** 124.993***

Note: Variables were coded on a five-point scale: never=1, seldom=2, sometimes=3, often=4, very often=5; °p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.005, ***p<.001; m=multiple modes

TABLE 6
Critical demographic and socio-economic information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster 1</th>
<th>Cluster 2</th>
<th>Cluster 3</th>
<th>Cluster 4</th>
<th>Cluster 5</th>
<th>F Tests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender (male=1)</td>
<td>.75 (.437)</td>
<td>.84 (.372)</td>
<td>.68 (.466)</td>
<td>.58 (.496)</td>
<td>.57 (.496)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (cont.)</td>
<td>48.69 (9.032)</td>
<td>48.84 (10.815)</td>
<td>46.71 (9.801)</td>
<td>47.23 (9.872)</td>
<td>49.93 (12.306)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race (white=1)</td>
<td>.81 (.396)</td>
<td>.77 (.421)</td>
<td>.82 (.382)</td>
<td>.83 (.380)</td>
<td>.89 (.311)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status (married=1)</td>
<td>.88 (.328)</td>
<td>.96 (.199)</td>
<td>.89 (.310)</td>
<td>.90 (.299)</td>
<td>.88 (.323)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (Bachelors and higher=1)</td>
<td>.84 (.370)</td>
<td>.88 (.329)</td>
<td>.82 (.385)</td>
<td>.73 (.444)</td>
<td>.66 (.474)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual household income (cont.)</td>
<td>$138,900 ($44,560)</td>
<td>$129,200 ($42,960)</td>
<td>$126,300 ($43,630)</td>
<td>$120,200 ($40,970)</td>
<td>$114,000 ($41,830)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Assets (cont.)</td>
<td>$1.593k ($1.968k)</td>
<td>$1.232k ($1.215k)</td>
<td>$1.216k ($1.738k)</td>
<td>$874k ($1.049k)</td>
<td>$1.096k ($1.381k)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: °p<.10*p<.05, **p<.005, ***p<.001; cont.= continuous variable

of perceived behavioral control captured investors’ confidence that they are capable of making investment decisions. The pairwise cluster comparisons support the descriptive findings that the high- and low-information investors differ significantly in their attitudes, beliefs, and perceived control toward investing (data available on request). Most significantly, the investor clusters differ for the enjoyment of and confidence in their investment skills and the desire to plan for the future.

Involvement variables

Literature on consumer information search proposes that the benefit of information search is, besides framing and risk tolerance, driven by the importance individuals give to the product category (Moorthy, Ratchford, and Talukdar 1997). Typically referred to as purchase involvement (Beatty and Smith 1987), investment decisions have been identified as high-involvement decisions due to the potential for large financial loss and the high costs of revising or recovering from a wrongful investment decision (Kahn and Baron 1995; Kunreuther et al. 2002). We identified three categories of involvement in investment decision making: (1) Independent decisions: One adult household member makes the investment decisions autonomously for the household; (2) Joint decisions: Investment decisions are made jointly in the household; and (3) Dependent decisions: Others are making the investment decisions for the household.

The clusters differ significantly in how investment decisions are made (cf. Table 8). The largest number of autonomous decisions is made in Cluster 2. Slightly more than half of the investors in this cluster make their households’ investment decision without input of others (51.5%). Cluster 5 investors most prominently prefer making investment decisions with their spouses (65.9%) and with-
TABLE 7

Significant psychological variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cluster 1 mean (SD)</th>
<th>Cluster 2 mean (SD)</th>
<th>Cluster 3 mean (SD)</th>
<th>Cluster 4 mean (SD)</th>
<th>Cluster 5 mean (SD)</th>
<th>F Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investing is exciting</td>
<td>3.93 (.811)</td>
<td>4.05 (.889)</td>
<td>3.42 (1.082)</td>
<td>3.44 (1.038)</td>
<td>2.99 (1.121)</td>
<td>26.390***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investing is satisfying</td>
<td>4.06 (.511)</td>
<td>4.01 (.685)</td>
<td>3.75 (.792)</td>
<td>3.69 (.835)</td>
<td>3.40 (.956)</td>
<td>17.141***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investing is time-</td>
<td>3.79 (.982)</td>
<td>3.85 (.978)</td>
<td>3.75 (1.019)</td>
<td>3.57 (1.055)</td>
<td>3.46 (1.032)</td>
<td>4.674**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consuming</td>
<td>3.91 (.788)</td>
<td>3.85 (.817)</td>
<td>3.27 (1.118)</td>
<td>3.20 (1.055)</td>
<td>3.00 (1.174)</td>
<td>20.103***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident about ability</td>
<td>3.98 (.609)</td>
<td>3.80 (.896)</td>
<td>3.40 (1.033)</td>
<td>3.27 (1.027)</td>
<td>2.87 (1.083)</td>
<td>29.777***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to invest</td>
<td>4.60 (.605)</td>
<td>4.70 (.459)</td>
<td>4.54 (.636)</td>
<td>4.39 (.661)</td>
<td>4.37 (.728)</td>
<td>7.161***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable about</td>
<td>3.99 (.495)</td>
<td>3.85 (.555)</td>
<td>4.31 (.694)</td>
<td>4.23 (.674)</td>
<td>4.18 (.762)</td>
<td>11.182***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>investing</td>
<td>3.79 (.982)</td>
<td>3.85 (.978)</td>
<td>3.75 (1.019)</td>
<td>3.57 (1.055)</td>
<td>3.46 (1.032)</td>
<td>4.674**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible for own</td>
<td>3.79 (.982)</td>
<td>3.85 (.978)</td>
<td>3.75 (1.019)</td>
<td>3.57 (1.055)</td>
<td>3.46 (1.032)</td>
<td>4.674**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>financial well-being</td>
<td>3.79 (.982)</td>
<td>3.85 (.978)</td>
<td>3.75 (1.019)</td>
<td>3.57 (1.055)</td>
<td>3.46 (1.032)</td>
<td>4.674**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like to plan financial</td>
<td>4.07 (.940)</td>
<td>3.69 (1.076)</td>
<td>3.77 (1.187)</td>
<td>4.30 (.926)</td>
<td>3.59 (1.201)</td>
<td>9.203***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>future</td>
<td>3.91 (.905)</td>
<td>3.88 (.998)</td>
<td>3.45 (1.112)</td>
<td>3.58 (.973)</td>
<td>3.47 (1.160)</td>
<td>5.792***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear idea of needs</td>
<td>3.42 (1.089)</td>
<td>3.35 (1.113)</td>
<td>3.12 (1.157)</td>
<td>3.11 (1.084)</td>
<td>2.86 (1.128)</td>
<td>6.417***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in retirement</td>
<td>3.42 (1.089)</td>
<td>3.35 (1.113)</td>
<td>3.12 (1.157)</td>
<td>3.11 (1.084)</td>
<td>2.86 (1.128)</td>
<td>6.417***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review financial</td>
<td>3.42 (1.089)</td>
<td>3.35 (1.113)</td>
<td>3.12 (1.157)</td>
<td>3.11 (1.084)</td>
<td>2.86 (1.128)</td>
<td>6.417***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>information in mail</td>
<td>3.42 (1.089)</td>
<td>3.35 (1.113)</td>
<td>3.12 (1.157)</td>
<td>3.11 (1.084)</td>
<td>2.86 (1.128)</td>
<td>6.417***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximize retirement</td>
<td>3.42 (1.089)</td>
<td>3.35 (1.113)</td>
<td>3.12 (1.157)</td>
<td>3.11 (1.084)</td>
<td>2.86 (1.128)</td>
<td>6.417***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contributions</td>
<td>3.42 (1.089)</td>
<td>3.35 (1.113)</td>
<td>3.12 (1.157)</td>
<td>3.11 (1.084)</td>
<td>2.86 (1.128)</td>
<td>6.417***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wish not to handle (R)</td>
<td>2.04 (.936)</td>
<td>2.01 (.990)</td>
<td>2.47 (1.254)</td>
<td>2.62 (1.231)</td>
<td>2.86 (1.279)</td>
<td>14.055***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Variables were coded on a five-point scale: strongly disagree=1, disagree=2, neutral=3, agree=4, strongly agree=5; m<p<.10*p<.05, **p<.005, ***p<.001

TABLE 8

Involvement in investment decision ($\chi^2$=57.536***)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cluster 1 (%)</th>
<th>Cluster 2 (%)</th>
<th>Cluster 3 (%)</th>
<th>Cluster 4 (%)</th>
<th>Cluster 5 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>57.7</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>70.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent on others</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p<.10; **p<.05; ***p<.001; N=908

out the involvement of the investor (11.4%). Decisions made jointly with others besides the spouse are most common among Cluster 1 (8.2%). This finding matches with the role that financial advisors play for this group. Except for three cluster combinations, Clusters 1/3, Clusters 1/4, and Clusters 3/4, the involvement structures differ significantly between the clusters in the pairwise comparison.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The different information search strategies found in this study can be roughly divided into three categories in accordance with the literature on U-shape relationships in information search (Guo 2001). The “high-informed group” consists of Clusters 1 and 2, the “low-informed group” consists of Clusters 4 and 5, and the “moderately informed group” consists of Cluster 3 investors. A U-shape relationship was observed for the involvement and age variables. The low-informed (Clusters 4, 5) and high-informed (Cluster 1) groups of investors practiced joint decision making more often than the moderately-informed group. Similarly, the high- and low-informed clusters were older than the moderately-informed investors. In contrast, the demographic, socio-economic, and psychological variables exhibited linear relationships with the information sources and the frequency of their use. Positive relationships were observed for gender, education, annual household income, financial assets and all the psychological variables. A negative relationship was observed only for the race variable indicating a larger number of minorities in the high-information clusters.
To conclude, this paper contributes to previous research on consumer search patterns and lends additional empirical evidence to support the existence of such patterns. It suggests that there is considerable similarity in the search behaviors of certain groups of investors plus significant distance between the groups to warrant cluster analysis. We have also presented a framework that integrates and suggests demographic, socio-economic and psychological explanation for observed patterns of search. The different levels of involvement of the investor clusters in the investment decision provided a suitable example for applying the framework in a managerially relevant manner.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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REFERENCES


Ingredient Branding Alliances: An Investigation of Brand Awareness and Feedback Effects

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Meng-Chun Tsai, National Chengchi University, Taiwan (R.O.C.)
Xiu-Hua Yan, BenQ Corporation, Taiwan (R.O.C.)

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The main motivation for adopting ingredient branding is that it helps the host brand to improve distribution accessibility, differentiate itself from other competitors and enhance the equity of the host brand by providing a strong signal to consumers that the composite product offers the combined benefits of two brands (Desai and Keller, 2002; Norris 1992). The ingredient brand can also build end users’ brand preference, stabilize consumers demand, and establish long-term relations with manufacturers (Norris 1992).

Desai and Keller (2002) defined ingredient branding as brand alliances by linking themselves through their products or other aspects of their marketing program to other firms of brands. Ingredient brand acts as one part of the product produced by the host brand. They also found that co-branded ingredient leads to more favorable evaluations of the products because ingredient brand could broaden the equity and improve the credibility of the host brand. And the ingredient brand may enhance its bargaining power to the host brand by increasing customers’ awareness of its own brand name.

Washburn et al. (2000) argued that regardless of the original brands had high or low brand equity in consumers’ perception, both partners would benefit from co-branding strategy. A high equity brand would not denigrate even if it paired with a low equity partner. Rodrigue and Biswas (2004) demonstrated that consumers’ attitudes toward both original brands showed a positive feedback effect in their empirical study. They also found that the feedback effect was moderated by the exclusivity of the contract which represented the dependency of the ingredient brand. On the other hand, ingredient branding may be at the risk of brand equity diluting due to unsuccessful branding strategy. The host and ingredient brands may benefit if the branding strategy succeeds, but they may suffer from failures. Thus, we propose that the success of ingredient branding would lead to positive feedback effect on both host and ingredient brands, but the failure would lead to negative feedback effect on both brands.

Although researchers found some moderators, such as favorability (Park et al. 1996), familiarity (Simonin and Ruth 1998), and quality (McCarty and Norris 1999), influence the feedback effect on brands alliances, those moderators were somehow similar and correlated. In fact, high-familiarity brands are often popular and accepted by most consumers. Consumers’ attitudes toward the popular brands would usually be better than other brands. It is also a signal of high quality otherwise there will not be so many consumers paying for it. In the current study, we used the similar term brand awareness as the moderator due to the extensive-ness of this concept.

Another factor which may influence the feedback effect of ingredient branding is the outcome of the alliance. This factor only appeared in the brand extension literature. Keller and Aaker (1992) found that a consumer would evaluate an average quality core brand more positively than high quality one when the alliance is successful. However, an unsuccessful extension did not affect consumers’ evaluation on the core brand regardless of the quality level of the core brand. Since brand with high awareness somehow represents higher quality, consumers may think ingredient branding alliance ought to be successful. Thereby, when the allied product does not perform well, consumers’ attitudes toward the high-awareness brand would become less favorable than the low-awareness one. Conversely, consumers often do not have much expectation on low-awareness brand. An unsuccessful product of the brand may be considered common, but a successful alliance may surprise the consumers and increase their favorable attitudes toward the focal brand.

Since the ingredient brand acts as a component of the product of host brand, the strength of feedback effect on two brands may be different. Most consumers care more about end-product brand names (Norris 1993). They would ask the manufacturer of end-products to take responsibility if they face any problem with the product which they purchased. Therefore, consumers may attribute the success or failure to the host brand instead of the ingredient brand.

Cameras and lens were selected as the target ingredient branding alliance in our study. A pretest was conducted in order to select the appropriate brands for the main study. We chose BenQ and Megxon as the high and low awareness camera brand. On the other hand, Leica and Sigma were chosen as the lens brand for the high and low awareness manipulation. Two hundred and forty-nine undergraduate students participated in the 2 (host brand awareness: high/low) X 2 (ingredient brand awareness: high/low) X 2 (outcome of brand alliances: successful/failure) experiment and were randomly assigned to the eight groups. In the first part of the questionnaire, consumers reported their attitudes toward the camera and lens brand, respectively. After reading the description about success or failure of the ingredient branding alliance product, respondents were asked to evaluate the two brands again.

Results showed the existence of negative feedback effect when ingredient branding strategy failed. The relative strength of feedback effects on both host and ingredient brands in different situations were also investigated. The results showed the low-awareness brand benefited more from the successful alliance than the high-awareness brand, but the high-awareness brand was harmed more severely from the unsuccessful alliance than the low-awareness brand when the partner was given. In addition, we also found that the relative feedback effect on the host brand and the ingredient brand, respectively, depended on the brand awareness of two brands in the alliance in a successful or failure condition. When two partner brands’ awareness were equal, the host brand benefited more than the ingredient brand in success situation, and the ingredient brand suffered more from the failed alliance. However, when two partner brands’ awareness was unequal, the relative strength of feedback effect on the two brands depended on the relative awareness of both brands. The low-awareness brand benefited more in successful condition, and the high-awareness brand harmed more severely in failure condition. The present research holds important implications for co-branding strategy.

References


ABSTRACT

This study examines if brand-incongruent advertising (ads which are incongruent with established brand associations) can break through the competitive advertising clutter. Challenging the popular belief in maintaining consistency in brand communications, we show that brand-incongruent ads can lead to an increase in attention, more sophisticated processing of brand associations, better ad and brand recall, as well as improved ad attitudes. Due to the competitive context, however, brand attitudes and purchase intentions remained unchanged. The study contributes to research on competitive advertising and information incongruity, in addition to having practical implications for advertising well-established brands.

INTRODUCTION

This study examines if incongruent advertising has the potential of breaking through the competitive advertising clutter, and how consumers respond to it. We examine a specific type of information incongruity, namely that between an advertisement and established associations for the advertised brand, referred to as ad-brand incongruity. Drawing on schema congruity theory, we examine the potential for this somewhat unconventional way of communicating, deviant from advice from brand management practice and textbooks embracing the importance of consistency in brand communications (e.g. Keller 2003). On the other hand, some research caution against exaggerating advertising consistency for well established brands (Alwitt, 2000; Dahlén et al. 2005; Machleit 1993; Sjödin and Törn 2006). Addressing this issue of balancing consistency and change in brand communications is important since the use of brand incongruent advertising should have the potential to combat two increasingly growing problems to established brands.

The first problem is that established brands need to be constantly rejuvenated and spark consumer interest: Research demonstrates that established brands increasingly need to be interesting if they are to be successful (Alwitt 2000; Machleit 1993) also in the future. The second problem is that established brands are located in mature markets and highly mature media. This makes it hard for established brands to break through the advertising clutter (Jewell and Unnava 2003; Pieters, Warlop, and Wedel 2000). Interestingly, these two problems are interlinked: The vast amount of marketing communications puts demands on advertising to be interesting to consumers (Alwitt 2000), and one way to reach through the advertising clutter is to make distinctive, creative, and interesting ad executions (e.g. Till and Baack 2005). Incongruent advertising should be such a way, but it is a more precise tool than the somewhat vaguely defined concepts of originality as proposed by Pieters et al. (2002) or creativity as proposed by Till and Baack (2005). Examining the more specific concept of brand-incongruent communications also provides an advantage over “originality” in that we can provide a theoretical background to explain the effects of incongruity based on a solid foundation in cognition literature.

Research has examined opportunities for employing information incongruity in ads (e.g., Houston, Heckler, and Childers 1987; Lee 2000; Lee and Mason 1999) and specifically the employment of advertising which is incongruent with established brand associations (Dahlén and Lange 2004; Dahlén et al. 2005; Lange and Dahlén 2003; Sjödin and Törn 2006). However, previous studies on effects of incongruent advertising (e.g., Dahlén and Lange 2004; Dahlén et al. 2005; Goodstein 1993; Lange and Dahlén 2003) have not discussed opportunities with incongruent communications from a competitive perspective. On the contrary, studies on incongruity have typically examined only one brand, or if there have been more brands, they have not been competing brands (e.g., Goodstein 1993).

This is highly problematic since advertisers typically select thematically congruent media for their advertising (Kent 2002), making competition from other brands difficult to avoid. In the presence of such competitive ads, brand advertising is less effective, one reason being that consumers have difficulties in retrieving brand-related information, a phenomenon known as competitive interference (Burke and Srull 1988; Jewell and Unnava 2003). Examining effects of incongruent advertising in a more realistic, competitive setting should therefore be of theoretical interest as well as practical relevance since the competitive context may hamper the positive effects of incongruity reported in previous studies.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There are numerous studies on effects of the use of information incongruity in the marketing literature. Studies have been conducted on incongruities between pictures and words in ads between an ad and a general viewer expectations, between features of a product and product category schemas, between brands and brand extensions as well as in sales-people schemas (for a review see Lee and Schumann 2004). Drawing on this literature and specifically a few studies on the employment of brand-incongruent information in advertising (Dahlén and Lange 2004; Dahlén et al. 2005; Lange and Dahlén 2003; Sjödin and Törn 2006), we examine the potential for brand incongruent advertising to combat effects of the competitive context.

The need for devising interesting communications campaigns becomes especially relevant in a cluttered advertising milieu, which is the case for most well established brands: In terms of media selection, marketers typically select media which are thematically congruent with the brand (Moorman et al. 2002). This makes competition fierce as similar brands select the same media (Kent 2002). Malaviya et al. (1999) found that a typical magazine may comprise close to 70 ads, divided into categories with up to five directly competing brands. Likewise, Law (2002) reported that 41 percent of TV ads in a prime-time hour has at least one direct competitor also advertising. Moreover, advertisers in a thematically congruent medium face competition also from the editorial material, directing consumers’ attention away from the ads, as they are more likely to focus on the editorial material than on ads (Jun et al. 2003).

The effects on attention of brand-incongruent advertising have not been examined previously, but schema theory postulates that information which fits an existing schema—that is, conforms to expectations—will be encoded effortlessly into that schema structure. When information does not fit the schema, however, people will engage in more extensive processing to resolve the incongruity (e.g., Mandler 1982; Srull 1981). Incongruent information will cause people to pay more attention to it, and make them more motivated to think about it, resulting in deeper cognition (Fiske, Kinder, and Larter 1983). For example, ads are viewed longer if...
they are incongruent compared to when they are consistent with previous knowledge (Goodstein 1993) and original ads induce more frequent eye fixations than traditional ads (Pieters et al. 2002). Recent research also suggests that processing ads in a cluttered ad context is a capacity-demanding job which will encourage ad perceivers to rely on salient heuristic cues to formulate judgments (Chang 2005). One such salient cue should be brand associations stored in long-term memory. If an ad execution does not conform to these brand associations, the heuristic cannot be utilized. This should force consumers to study the ad longer to make sense out of it. Consequently, we expect that consumers will pay more attention to brand-incongruent ads than brand-congruent ads (H1).

Previous research has documented that in the presence of competitive advertising, there is a lower recall of target brand information (e.g., Jewell and Unnava 2003). Commonly investigated from the perspective of associative network memory, interference refers to the impaired ability to remember information about a stimulus from long-term memory since other information interferes with the retrieval of the target information. This seems to take place independent of whether competing ads feature brands in the same product category (Burke and Srull 1988) or in different product categories (Kumar 2000).

However, incongruent advertising should be able to combat interference effects: Not only does incongruent information in general have a tendency to attract attention, the mental activity is interfered with the retrieval of the target information. This seems to take place independent of whether competing ads feature brands in the same product category (Burke and Srull 1988) or in different product categories (Kumar 2000).

Therefore, we expect that incongruent advertising also has the potential to affect evaluations.

An effect on evaluations could also be inferred from schema congruity theory: We can expect that for congruent ads, which are unlikely to lead to cognitive elaboration or arousal, the evaluation of the ad and brand is typically mild (cf. Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989). The incongruent ad on the other hand is likely to be perceived as challenging and interesting (Alwitt 2000). Furthermore, the challenging ad will cause cognitive elaboration, as pointed out previously, and a questioning of how the ad fits with the established brand schema. Mandler (1982) argued that incongruity could be resolved rather easily through assimilation or the use of alternative schemas. When this is the case, positive affect will follow from the success of the resolution (cf. Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989). This should color evaluations (e.g., Lee and Mason 1999) and enhance purchase intentions of the advertised brand. Furthermore, the elaboration of the brand schema increases the salience of the brand in memory (Alba and Chattopadhyay 1986), which in turn leads to enhanced brand attitude (Holden and Vanhuele 1999). We therefore expect that brand-incongruent ads generate higher (H4a) brand attitudes, (H5a) brand attitudes, and (H6a) purchase intentions than brand-congruent ads.

However, processing ads in a competitive, cluttered setting is more demanding of consumers than processing ads in isolation (Burke and Srull 1988; Chang 2005). Furthermore, when several brands advertise in the same medium, consumers tend to engage more in relational, or between-brand, processing rather than individual, within-brand processing, meaning that they focus more on common traits between brands than unique brand features (Malaviya et al. 1996, 1999). This should have consequences for the resolution of the incongruity as consumers may not have the capacity to resolve it. Analogous to findings that external conditions such as limited time may hamper resolution of incongruity (Srull 1981), we believe that the competitive setting may limit resolution ability. If resolution cannot be resolved, negative affect will typically follow which would harm evaluations of the incongruent ad and brand (Mandler 1982; Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989). So although incongruity in advertising offers the potential for cutting through the clutter by raising attention and enhancing brand memory, resolution of incongruity in a competitive setting (i.e. ads in the presence of ads for competing brands) may simply demand too much effort to become successful. Consequently we propose an alternative to hypotheses 4–6 for competitive settings, such that brand-incongruent ads generate lower (H4b) brand attitudes, (H5b) brand attitudes, and (H6b) purchase intentions than brand-congruent ads.

**METHOD**

Ad-brand incongruity (2 levels—brand congruent and/brand incongruent ad) was operationalized as a between-subjects variable. Using print advertisements inserted into real magazines, the hypotheses were tested in an experiment in which participants were exposed to advertising for familiar brands and asked to indicate...
their reactions to the advertisement and the brand. Participants were thus exposed to one target ad and several competitive filler ads.

A sample of 38 college students (from the same population as in the experiment) were asked to rate a number of brands on familiarity (scale 1-7, ranging from “not at all familiar with” to “very familiar with”) and associations along 14 dimensions of brand personality. The scale for brand personality was adapted from a subset of dimensions presented by Aaker (1997).

Based on the results of the pre-test, we selected two familiar brands that differed significantly from each other in terms of brand associations. The first brand was L’Oréal, which was rated as highly familiar ($M=5.87$), and whose four most strongly held associations were: successful, charming, cheerful and imaginative (all $M>5$). The second brand was Gore-Tex, which was also rated as highly familiar ($M=5.51$), and whose four most strongly held associations were: reliable, down-to-earth, honest and intelligent (all $M>5$). The associations differed significantly ($p<.01$) between the brands, so that the four most strongly held associations for each brand rated below 4 (midpoint of the scale) for the other brand.

Magazines were chosen as a medium for two reasons. Print media are reader-paced and are therefore well-suited for research concerning information incongruity (cf. Lee 2000). This is because subjects can process the ads for as long as they want, allowing for differences in attention and elaboration induced by the ad placements. Secondly, they are typically thematic and comprise ads for competing brands (Malaviya et al. 1999), thus creating a possibility for competitive interference effects.

To control for prior exposure to ads, a professional advertising agency developed new ads for each brand employing the associations elicited in the first pretest. For each brand, one brand-congruent ad and one brand-incongruent ad were developed. The congruent ad for L’Oréal featured the face of a model-like young woman while the incongruent ad featured the face of rock artist Iggy Pop. The congruent ad for Gore-Tex portrayed a person alpine skiing while the incongruent ad portrayed a person indoor playing the guitar. In a second pretest 30 participants judged how well the ad fit the brand well ($M=6.23$). The results showed that the congruent ads fit the brand well ($M(L’Oréal) = 6.12$, $M(Gore-Tex) = 5.95$) and that the incongruent ads had low fit with the brand ($M(L’Oréal) = 1.89$, $M(Gore-Tex) = 2.33$).

To select appropriate magazines in which to place the ads, 30 participants were presented with a list of magazines and asked to indicate how well each magazine fit the two brands (1= low perceived fit to 7= high perceived fit). Two magazines were selected on the basis of the results of the pretest: “Cosmopolitan” for L’Oréal and “Outdoor Sports Magazine” for Gore-Tex. L’Oréal had a high fit ($M=6.16$) with Cosmopolitan and Gore-Tex had a high fit with Outdoor Sports magazine ($M=6.11$). Both brands had also been advertising repeatedly in the selected magazines.

A sample of 169 college students participated in the study. Students were randomly assigned to one of four groups (L’Oréal congruent ad/L’Oréal incongruent ad/Gore-Tex congruent ad/Gore-Tex incongruent ad). Copies of the magazines were distributed together with a questionnaire. Participants were instructed to look through the magazine in the “same fashion that you normally do for this type of magazine”, thus being exposed to the target ad as well as several filler ads. When participants finished reading, they closed the magazines and answered the questions in the booklet. To clear short time memory, the first part of the questionnaire consisted of filler items (demographics and magazine-related questions). The second part consisted of measures of memory, attention, processing, and evaluations.

Attention (H1) was measured by self-reported study time: “Approximately how long time did you study the ad when you looked through the magazine the first time? About __ seconds”. Brand associations (H2) were measured with the question “How well do you think the following adjectives describe the brand?” Respondents rated each adjective on a seven-point Likert type scale. The measures of brand associations were adopted from a subset of a scale of brand personality developed by Aaker (1997). The four brand associations found to be associated most strongly (all $M>5$) with each brand, respectively, in the pre-tests, were successful, charming, cheerful and imaginative for L’Oréal, and reliable, down-to-earth, honest and intelligent for Gore-Tex. These associations were selected for the testing of H2.

Three different aspects of memory (H3) were examined: ad related brand recall, ad related brand recognition, and ad message memorability. Ad related brand recall was examined by asking participants to “name all brands, for which you have just seen ads”. Answers were coded as 1 (focal brand recalled), or 0 (focal brand not recalled). Ad related brand recognition was examined by asking participants to “Please tick the names for the brands, for which you have just seen ads”. A list with all brands that were advertised in the magazine was presented. To control for false recognition several brands not advertised in the magazine were also included in the list. However, no participant falsely marked an additional brand. Answers were coded as 1 (focal brand recognized), or 0 (focal brand not recognized). Ad message memorability was measured using the questions: “How difficult was it to remember the message of the ad?” The answer was given on a 7-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (very easy) to 7 (very difficult). The measure has been found to be a valid proxy of competitive interference (Dahlén and Nordfält 2004).

Ad attitude was measured on a seven-point semantic differential scale consisting of three items: good/bad, pleasant/unpleasant, favorable/unfavorable. An index was produced by averaging the responses to the items (Cronbach’s $\alpha=.89$). Brand attitude was measured with the following three items: good/bad, negative/positive, and satisfactory/unsatisfactory. The averaged index had a Cronbach’s $\alpha=.93$). Purchase intentions were measured with “Imagine you were to buy a winter jacket (beauty product), how likely is it that you would buy one with Gore-Tex (buy L’Oréal)?” on a scale ranging from 1 (not at all likely) to 7 (very likely).

RESULTS

As a manipulation check, ad-brand incongruity was assessed by indexing two measures: “How well does the ad fit/match the brand?” ($r=.94$). The congruent ad had a significantly, $t(167)=9.6$, $p<.01$, higher fit ($M=4.50$) with the brand than did the incongruent ad ($M=2.19$).

A MANOVA (multivariate analysis of variance) was run on all dependent variables (excluding brand associations, which were tested separately for each brand). Level of congruity had a significant main effect on dependent variables, $F(7,159)=11.25$, $p<.01$, Wilks’ $\lambda=.67$. Whereas brand had a significant main effect ($F(7,159)=4.79$, $p<.01$, Wilks’ $\lambda=.83$) on dependent variables (e.g., brand attitude was higher for Gore-Tex than for L’Oréal), there was no significant interaction effect with level of incongruity ($F<2$). Thus, for purposes of testing H1 and H3-H4, the two congruent conditions were collapsed, as were the two brand-incongruent conditions. H2 had to be tested separately since the set of brand associations were unique to each brand. Planned comparisons (with significance levels Bonferroni adjusted) were used to test each hypothesis individually.
H1 stated that consumers will pay relatively more attention to brand-incongruent ads than brand-congruent ads. As shown in Table 1, analysis of the self-reported study time of the ad showed a significant difference ($p < .01$) between the congruent and incongruent conditions, such that study time was longer for incongruent ads ($M=6.24$ seconds, $SD=4.69$) than for congruent ads ($M=2.35$ seconds, $SD=1.39$). Therefore, H1 is supported.

In order to investigate H2, we conducted exploratory factor analyses (PCA with Varimax rotation) of brand associations, separately for each brand. Results are shown in Table 2. The procedure was based on Low and Lamb (2000) and Dahlén et al (2005), who used PCA of a fixed number of associations to test differences in sophistication of brand schemata. By examining how, and into how many, components associations fall into, we get an indication of how well consumers can discriminate between items of brand-related information. The more components, the more sophisticated is the representation of brand-related knowledge: In the congruent conditions, the PCAs produced two components, one component for target brand associations and one for non-target brand associations, whereas in the incongruent conditions, the PCAs produced three components with brand associations no longer loading on the same component. This gives support to H2: Brand-incongruent ads seem to lead to a more sophisticated processing of brand associations than brand-congruent ads.

H3 suggested that memory of the ad and brand should be better for brand-incongruent ads than brand-congruent ads. Planned comparisons for ad-related brand recall, ad-related brand recognition, and ad message memorability all showed significant (all $p < .01$) results in accordance with the hypotheses (Table 1). Hence, H3 is supported.

### TABLE 1
Tests for Hypotheses 1, 3 and 4-6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Congruent condition</th>
<th>Incongruent condition</th>
<th>Planned comparisons (1)</th>
<th>Planned comparisons (2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attention (H1)</td>
<td>2.35 secs</td>
<td>6.24 secs</td>
<td>$F(1,165)=52.93$, $p &lt; .01$</td>
<td>$F(1,164) = 44.28$, $p &lt; .01$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory (H3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad-related brand recall</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>$F(1,165)=22.47$, $p &lt; .01$</td>
<td>$F(1,164) = 12.46$, $p &lt; .01$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad related brand recognition</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>$F(1,165)=13.62$, $p &lt; .01$</td>
<td>$F(1,164) = 13.87$, $p &lt; .01$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad message memorability</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>$F(1,165)=17.93$, $p &lt; .01$</td>
<td>$F(1,164) = 10.16$, $p &lt; .01$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad Attitude (H4)</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>$F(1,164) = 8.54$, $p &lt; .01$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand attitude (H5)</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase intention (H6)</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1): initial MANOVA: $F(7,159)=11.25$, $p < .01$, Wilks’ $\lambda=.67$
(2): additional MANOVA with ad-brand fit as covariate: $F(7,158)=10.85$, $p < .01$, Wilks’ $\lambda=.68$

### TABLE 2
Brand associations (H2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gore-Tex Congruent Condition</th>
<th>Gore-Tex Incongruent Condition</th>
<th>L’oréal Congruent Condition</th>
<th>L’oréal Incongruent Condition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Factor 1</td>
<td>Factor 2</td>
<td>Factor 3</td>
<td>Factor 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gore-Tex brand associations</td>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>Down-to-earth</td>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>Down-to-earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Honest</td>
<td></td>
<td>Honest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td></td>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’oréal brand associations</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>Charming</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>Charming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cheerful</td>
<td>Ccharming</td>
<td>Cheerful</td>
<td>Cheeryl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imaginative</td>
<td></td>
<td>Imaginative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TVE (Gore-Tex$_{Congruent}$)=72 %, TVE (Gore-Tex$_{InCongruent}$)=73 %
TVE (L’oréal$_{Congruent}$)=63 %, TVE (L’oréal$_{Incongruent}$)=71 %
As for H4-H6, we hypothesized that ad-brand incongruity would affect ad attitudes, brand attitudes, and purchase intentions. However, analysis of results showed no significant difference in either direction on ad attitude, brand attitude, or purchase intentions between the two conditions ($p > .2$). However, since the effects of incongruity on evaluation may be contingent on resolution of incongruity (Mandler 1982), for exploratory purposes we re-ran the MANOVA using the index for perceived fit between the ad and brand as a covariate. Level of congruity again had a significant main effect on dependent variables, but this time the effect of incongruity was significant also on ad attitude (see Table 1). This suggests that the effect on ad attitude is contingent on consumers’ ability to resolve the incongruity.

**DISCUSSION**

This study examined effects of brand-incongruent advertising in competitive settings. The results showed that ads, which are incongruent with established brand associations, can lead to an increase in attention, more sophisticated processing of brand associations, better ad and brand recall as well as enhanced ad attitudes. However, brand attitudes and purchase intentions remained unchanged. The results of this study contribute to research on competitive advertising and information incongruity, in addition to having practical implications for advertising of well-established brands.

This study contributed to competitive interference literature by providing support for the idea that information which is incongruent with established brand associations may be an effective means of reaching through the advertising clutter: We noticed that the incongruent ad was more attended to and better remembered than the congruent ad. In addition, consumers more strongly elaborated on, and more finely processed, brand associations after having been exposed to an incongruent ad. Such an effect should be desirable for mature brands since advertising for mature brands are seldom thoroughly processed (cf. Alden et al 2000). Also, it could provide opportunities for brand schema change if the advertiser is interested in rearranging brand associations, for instance before launching new, less related products under the same brand (cf. Jewell and Unnava 2003).

Contributing to the information incongruity literature, we demonstrated previously untested effects of brand incongruent advertising enhancing ad and brand recall. Our research also showed that there may be boundary conditions to the positive effects of incongruity observed in previous studies. It seems as if the competitive context is such a boundary condition, hampering the ability to resolve incongruent ads. Since advertising for established brands typically is located in a competitive setting, we should not anticipate brand-incongruent ads to indisputably improve brand evaluations. This study shows that employing incongruity may not be the guaranteed success one might interpret the conclusions by Dahllén et al (2005). In a more realistic setting than their study, we did find expected effects of ad-brand incongruity on attention, processing and memory, but these effects did not suffice to improve brand evaluations in the competitive setting. This study also showed that brand-incongruent ads improves ad attitudes, but only if consumers are able to resolve the incongruity inherent in the ads. This calls for close observation of the level of incongruity and the opportunity and ability to resolve the incongruity in the employment of incongruent advertising. As the positive evaluative effects of incongruity only follow if the incongruity is resolvable (Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989), in competitive settings advertisers may need to reduce the level of incongruity even more to make it moderately incongruent and/or enhance resolution opportunities.

One way to do this might be to use informative copy texts that help the viewer resolve the incongruity (cf. Bridges et al 2000).

From a managerial perspective, the results of this study indicate that the popular tendency of embracing consistency in brand advertising may have to be revisited, at least for well-established brands. Although incongruity did not improve brand evaluations in this study, three other desired advertising effects were observed showing that incongruity can reach through the advertising clutter: It causes consumers to better pay attention, to better remember the ad message and focal brand and improves ad evaluations (when incongruity is resolved). For established brands, the advertising campaign objective must not always necessarily be the improvement of brand attitudes (as long as brand attitudes are not hurt). Instead it could be to enhance brand salience in consumer memory to keep the brand “top-of-mind” ( Ehrenberg et al 2002; Machleit et al 1993). Consequently, for established brands in a cluttered advertising milieu, the positive effects on attention, memory, and ad attitudes may be enough reason to employ brand-incongruent advertising. Indeed, these objectives could be obtained without risks of jeopardizing brand attitudes or purchase intentions.

Practitioners and academics alike would benefit from future research examining the role of involvement on the effects of brand-incongruent communications as the present study did not consider this important factor. Drawing on previous research, we may expect incongruent communication in high involvement situations to stand a better chance of being resolved than in low-involvement situations, as consumers with high involvement will devote more cognitive effort to a stimulus, facilitating information processing (cf. Maoz and Tybout 2002; Petty, Cacioppo and Schumann 1983).

**REFERENCES**


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Consumer research is problematic for really new products (Veryzer 1998). A difficulty is to collect valid product evaluations from consumers who have limited knowledge about the possibilities of such products. In this paper, we provide consumers with information about a really new product that enables them to imagine what the product might bring them. By imagining the new product, consumers mentally simulate the activity of using the new product, leading to a surrogate-experience of the new product (Hoeffler 2003). The result should improve comprehension of how the really new product functions and thus enable more valid product evaluations.

An imagery-evoking tool was used to test this proposition, namely, an early concept narrative of someone using the product. Narratives are processed differently from non-narrative information, in that a narrative transports the reader/listener mentally to another world that has its own set of rules and situations (Gerrig 1993). This process of ‘transportation’ is essential in helping consumers to imagine what it will be like to use the product. Earlier literature has identified the use of mental imagery as a part of transportation, but also two additional components: feelings and heightened attention to the stimulus (Green and Brock 2000).

We argue that consumers who are unfamiliar with the product context are aided by narrative transportation to understand the benefits of a really new product. In contrast, consumers with more knowledge of or experience with the product context are not aided by narratives in their comprehension of the new product, even though they may still process narratives more readily than consumer with low familiarity. Based on this argumentation, two hypotheses are formulated:

**H1**: Familiarity with the product domain will increase comprehension.

**H2**: The relationship between domain familiarity and product comprehension is moderated by transportation. Transportation enhances comprehension among those with low domain familiarity, whereas for those with high domain familiarity, transportation has no influence on levels of comprehension.

In a web-questionnaire (N=206), respondents were asked to evaluate a story in which somebody was using a product. Two concept narratives were constructed, both telling about an application of a new technology that enables the provision of product information to consumers during shopping. The first narrative was about a product that helped while shopping for clothes, the second showed the same application while shopping for electronics. By doing so, we tried to create different levels of familiarity with the product domain.

Before reading the narrative, respondents filled in a questionnaire with questions assessing familiarity with the product domain. Next, one of the narratives was presented and they then completed an objective comprehension measure of 24 true/false items. Finally, transportation was measured with 14 items that could later be subdivided into the three subscales of imagery, affective immersion, and heightened attention.

Hypothesis 1 stated that familiarity leads to more comprehension of the new product. In a regression analysis, familiarity had a significant effect on comprehension, while controlling for a number of other factors. Furthermore, hypothesis 2 was tested using three regression analyses with the three transportation subscales, familiarity, their interactions and some control variables as independent variables. The hypothesis was accepted. The interaction effect of familiarity and affective immersion was significant, as well as the interaction effect of familiarity and attention. Simple slope analysis showed that respondents with low familiarity depend on all three subscales of transportation to understand the product, whereas consumers with high familiarity do not.

In conclusion, the results show that consumers who are unfamiliar with the product domain are aided by narrative transportation to understand the benefits of a really new product, especially because the narratives helps them to become immersed in the experiences of the portrayed user, and because the narrative helps them to stay focused on the text. They need transportation to ‘fill the gap’ between their prior experience and the really new product. They need a surrogate experience to give them a better understanding of the product. Consumers who are more familiar with the product context score better on a comprehension task about the new product, but they do not depend on transportation to arrive at an understanding of the new product.

These results are important for a better employment of consumers in the evaluation of early concepts of really new products. In addition, it is shown how the effect transportation on comprehension is entangled with that of familiarity. This helps to extend the possibilities for consumer research on really new products, and also adds to the extant knowledge about transportation in other fields of consumer behavior.

References


**EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

**Concepts**

Pleasure as felt during a consumption experience can range (Eccles et al., 2006) from a reflex response of the senses to an optimal state of contentment called “flow” (enjoyment). Some studies have revealed the existence of a kind of sub-category of the flow experience, one based on a less total and more ephemeral type of enjoyment, the so-called “small victories”. Consequently, we consider in this research three modulations of pleasure/enjoyment: excitation, small victories and flow.

In experiential marketing approaches, it would seem that the consumer is supposed to gain an immediate access to the experience. However, the access to experience is neither obvious nor systematic and requires competencies that the consumer does not necessarily possess. Two models are on offer as ways of understanding the process for accessing experience: the “flow model” by Csikszentmihalyi (1997) that describes the ways of accessing a flow experience; and the “appropriation model” that Carù and Cova (2006) developed to describe ways of accessing a pleasurable/enjoyable consumption experience. The flow model emphasizes two components of the access to experience: control and concentration. The appropriation model describes three operations in order to access the experience: nesting, investigating, stamping. These appropriation operations are as it follows:

- **Nesting**: the individual feels at home after isolating part of the experience, being the aspect with which the person is already familiar due to his/her accumulated experience and existing foothold;
- **Investigating** (Exploration): starting from the nest that has been built up in this fashion, the individual will try to explore and identify new products or activities so as to develop certain points of anchorage and control (signposts);
- **Stamping**: a person will attribute a specific meaning to an experience or a part thereof. This meaning will not be the one that is commonly ascribed to the experience but instead a personal one, rooted in the individual’s own referents, history, etc.

The overall aim of our research is to compare the flow model and the appropriation model and analyze how their access operations impact on the three pleasure/enjoyment modulations.

**Method**

We choose to concentrate on virtual or online experiences (achieved through Internet) and especially on experiences lived with three types of ICT-related services (Siddiqui and Turley, 2006): Social Interaction Directed websites (the photo-blog Wanadoo Photo and the personal pages system MyMSN); Information Rich websites (Google Earth); Service Oriented websites (MSN Shopping). Consumers were asked to freely browse one of the service websites chosen by them for a period of around 40 minutes. The study was based on a sample of novice, average and expert Internet users, geographically split between large and me-dium-sized cities. The sample was comprised of 60 subjects from France and Italy.

We used an approach based on retrospective introspection: subjects were required to write a narrative report of her/his experience, without any particular frame to follow. Each report was 1 to 2 pages long. Each narrative report drafted by a subject was coupled with an ethnographic type of description drafted by the researcher who observed the Internet navigation. Analysis covered the 55 narratives/observations deemed valid. The analysis and interpretation of the introspective narratives’ contents involved both an intra-textual and an inter-textual approach. Analysis focused on the temporal structure of the reports. A quantitative data processing based on the frequency of each component/operation/modulation’s appearance was applied to each narrative/observation. As additional analysis, a statistical processing of all data was then executed in order to verify the causal relations between the variables considered and the impact of the level of expertise of the subjects and the type of website on the subjects’ behaviour.

**Findings**

Our study first shows that enjoyment is not so frequent whenever experiences with ICT-related services are involved: 27% of the subjects experienced enjoyment and it is also a quite rare state during a navigation. The access to this kind of state must not be the sole aim of a marketing programme.

When we tried to use existing models to describe and/or specify the processes for accessing pleasure/enjoyment in a consumption experience, we found out that the appropriation and flow models each account for at least part of this process. If we concentrate on appropriation model, the more one goes from simple excitation to small victories and then to flow states, the greater the nesting operations’ relative weight and the smaller is the role played by exploration operations. Translated into managerial terms, these results confirm the idea that to achieve immersion, it is not enough for companies to over-stimulate consumers’ senses and imagination. This should involve mechanisms helping consumers to nest in their context (stability exercise) and to control it (developing stability).

Looking at the two components of the flow model and how they relate to pleasure/enjoyment, one can note the primacy of positive control in accessing small victories. Control in its extreme manifestations seems to play the role of a component that “vetoes” access to pleasure/enjoyment during an experience. Too much control means suppressing all challenges and preventing any access to enjoyment.

Finally, our results also show that unlike what has been observed with off-line services (Ladwein, 2002), in the case of on-line services immersion is not facilitated by expertise. The inter-textual analysis seems to show that in the ICT-related services sector, a flow state is something of an exception that seems to depend more on the type of site involved and less on the individual’s skills level.

The total sum of these findings should be put into context so that we can understand their impact and limitations. First of all, with respect to participants’ level of familiarity with Internet, the sample
features an over-representation of average users (28 individuals) as opposed to experts (17) and novices (10). Second, this familiarisation concerns the Internet as a whole and not a specific acquaintance with ICT-related services. Third, our thematic analysis does not cover every single theme that the narratives and observations raise. Further research might involve investigating which elements of an ICT-related service can have a positive or a negative experiential impact on the operations/components of the immersion process.

References
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This paper examines cross cultural differences in delight. Delight is a combination of affect (pleasure or happiness) and surprise (contrast with expectations). In consumer and business marketing, pleasant surprises occur when customers experience new products, new features of familiar products, service upgrades, sales promotions, or free gifts. Past research shows that surprising positive events are more pleasurable than expected positive events, and surprising negative events are more painful. Surprise amplifies emotional experiences by causing arousal and activation that heightens valence. However, are such magical effects universal? Are Chinese customers and American consumers delighted by the same events? If so, does delight have the same effects on behavior? Cross cultural researchers have found numerous differences in the expression of emotions between Westerners and East Asians. The frequency and intensity of positive emotions is stronger in Western cultures than in Asian cultures (Scollon, Diener, Oishi, & Biswas-Diener, 2004; Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999). Asians also tend to report lower levels of well-being.

Why? First, groups differ in cultural norms. It is more desirable to express and experience positive feelings in Western cultures (Kitayama, Markus and Kurokawa 2000), Asian cultures are more accepting of negative feelings (Diener and Suh 1999). Second, groups differ in their need for positive self regard. A review by Heine, Lehman, Markus and Kitayama (1999) suggests that Japanese are more critical of themselves than Westerners. Greater self criticism could lead to lower levels of well being. Third, groups differ in their outlook on the future. Chang, Asakawa, and Sanna (2001) compared optimism and pessimism by asking Japanese and European Americans to predict the probability of life events. European Americans showed no differences in their predictions of their own futures and those of others. However, Japanese participants believed they were less likely than others to experience positive events; they exhibited a pessimistic bias.

On the other hand, probably the most well-known difference between Westerners and East Asians involves reasoning styles. Nisbett, Peng, Choi, and Norenzayan (2001) argued that East Asians are holistic and make little use of categories, while Westerners focus their attention on objects and the categories to which they belong. East Asians rely heavily on dialetheical reasoning, while Westerners are more likely to use analytical reasoning based on formal rules and logic. The holistic reasoning style of Asian cultures is guided by the assumption that everything in the universe is connected (Choi, Dalal, & Kim-Prieto, 1999). Holistic reasoning styles are also associated with a greater acceptance of contradiction. Confronted with apparent contradictions, a dialectical person will try to reconcile the opposing propositions, seek a middle way, or transcend the points of disagreement. The analytical thinking style tends to confront the contradiction head on and reject the less plausible proposition (Peng & Nisbett, 1999). Perhaps because they create more holistic and complex causal theories, East Asians are less likely that Westerners to experience surprise and more likely to experience hindsight (Choi and Nisbett, 2000).

If surprising positive events are more pleasurable than expected positive events and East Asians are less likely to experience surprise, they may report less pleasure than Westerners when confronted with a positive unexpected event. We argue that these cross-cultural differences are due, in part, to differences in the extent of exhibited hindsight bias, which, in turn, affects experienced surprise. Finally, we expect that positive feelings about an unexpected gift may transfer to related stimulus such as a store, brand or product.

We designed three studies to test the effect of cultural orientation on affective reactions to an unanticipated gift and attitudes towards a related product/services:

In Experiment 1, we found support for the hypothesis that Westerners derive greater pleasure than East Asians from an unannounced gift ($2 gift certificate at a University Café) relative to no gift. Moreover, Westerners are happier than East Asians with an unannounced gift (University car sticker valued at $2) relative to an equivalent announced gift. Culture was a moderator of expectations on reported pleasure. Westerners were more delighted than East Asians by unexpected positive events. Experiment 2 investigated cross-cultural differences in surprise and hindsight as potential causes of affective differences. We found that Westerners reported less hindsight and more surprise than East Asians with an unexpected gift. Surprise mediated immediate pleasure. Surprise and hindsight were negatively correlated. Presumably, East Asians believed that they could better anticipate unexpected events, and, as a consequence, felt less surprised about it. In Experiment 2, the gift was a University car sticker that was allegedly provided by the University Bookstore as a token of appreciation for completing a customer satisfaction survey. Reported pleasure associated with the car sticker transferred to attitudes about the bookstore. Momentary pleasure was correlated with attitudes. Not only did Westerners feel happier than East Asians about the unexpected gift, Westerners had more positive attitudes towards the bookstore when the gift was unexpected. Experiment 3 builds on research showing that East Asians and Westerners differ in their concept of luck, and East Asians are more likely than Westerners to believe that luck helps one deal with uncertainty. Experiment 3 demonstrates that East Asians derive greater pleasure than Westerners from an unexpected gift associated with good luck, and that their positive affect transfers to the overall experience of the experiment. In other words, the addition of a luck element allows East Asians to experience the emotional amplification resulting from the unexpectedness of the gift.

Our findings have implications for the design of international marketing strategies. Marketers often use pleasant surprises to influence consumers’ brand evaluations and, thus, purchase decisions. In fact, the marketing literature emphasizes the role of consumer delight as a source of competitive advantage (Oliver, Rust and Varki 1997). However, the use of “delighting” marketing activities across countries has to accommodate these identified differences in consumer reactions to “unexpectedness”.
References
In this exploratory study, we took a naturalistic approach and examined Chinese death ritual consumption. In contemporary China, burning paper replicas of consumer products, ranging from everyday items to luxury goods, has regained popularity with the ascending consumerism in society. It is believed by many Chinese consumers that after burning them, the paper goods could be received and enjoyed by the deceased in the otherworld. Chinese death ritual provides a unique context to explore important theoretical issues regarding the expansion of global consumerism and its impact on society. We also provided evidence that both supported and challenged previous theories of consumer desire, gift-giving, and conspicuous consumption.

A Hedonic/Utilitarian Dual Mediation Hypothesis in the Measurement of Website Communication Effectiveness
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The Internet has become one of the hottest areas in advertising and communication research (Chung and Zhao 2004). Websites represent the more durable and common communication activity carried out by companies on the Internet (Bart et al. 2005, Karson and Korganondar 2001). This paper aims at contributing to a better understanding of the factors that determine website effectiveness as a communication tool. We develop a model which incorporates consumers’ cognitive and emotional responses simultaneously in the attitude formation process.

MacKenzie et al. (1986) showed that the Dual Mediation Hypothesis (DMH), the most widely accepted model of advertising effects, best explained the relationships among attitudes and purchase intention in the advertising communication process. According to recent literature, we can apply conventional proposals to websites by substituting websites for ads in traditional models (Karson and Fisher 2005).

Persuasion research has been dominated by the cognitive approach (Morris et al. 2002). Nevertheless, finding ways and means to incorporate emotional experience into consumer and market research has been an ongoing challenge for a long time (Allen et al. 2005). Research has studied consumers’ emotional responses to advertisements extensively (Burke and Edell 1989), and has found that emotions can affect attitude towards the brand and attitude towards the ad significantly (Kempf and Smith 1998). Recently, Allen et al. (2005) demonstrated that emotional information may serve as a separate antecedent of attitude. That means that emotional reports will add to traditional cognitive information in explaining attitude’s variance. In fact, it seems clear that if we are to fully comprehend what factors attitude depends on, we must ask consumers to report not only their cognitive states, but also their emotional experiences.

Voss et al. (2003) have developed a valid, reliable, and generalizable scale to measure the hedonic and utilitarian dimensions of consumers’ attitude. They integrate their scale in the context of the Dual Mediation Hypothesis (DMH) but restricting the scope of the study to the central route of processing. This model misses the holistic focus necessary for understanding the communication process and, moreover, cognitive and emotional elaboration is not measured directly but using involvement as a proxy. In this research, we aim at overcoming such weaknesses by testing a hedonic/utilitarian DMH model of communication effectiveness. This model, based on DMH, uses emotional and cognitive responses as antecedents of hedonic and utilitarian dimensions of attitude, respectively, both towards the website and the product displayed in the website. We also compare our conceptual model with the other alternatives for which MacKenzie et al. (1986) found support: the Affect Transfer Hypothesis, the Reciprocal Mediation Hypothesis and the Independent Influences Hypotheses. What is more, we check whether the extension proposed by Karson and Fisher (2005), in which a path between attitude towards the website and attitude towards the product is introduced, fits our data better than the DMH.

We are currently collecting the data. We use holiday travel bookings through a real website as the stimulus. On arrival at the computer laboratory, subjects are informed about the procedure. First, some control variables are measured. Second, subjects visit the specified real website and interact with it. They are instructed to book a holiday package to London for the last weekend of February. Then, participants write down all the thoughts that come to their minds while they were on the website (MacKenzie et al. 1986; Sicilia et al. 2005), as well as all the feelings and emotions they experience during exposure (Coulter 1998). Finally, subjects report their hedonic and utilitarian dimensions of attitude towards the website and towards the product using the HED/UT scale (Voss et al. 2003), as well as their purchase intention (Zhang 1996). Three independent judges unfamiliar with the study objectives will code and classify the cognitive and emotional responses as positive, negative or neutral. Structural equations modeling will be used to test the theoretical model.

Our study provides insights into the simultaneous influence of both emotional and cognitive responses. This way, the cognitive paradigm in communication effectiveness models is overcome (Allen et al. 2005; Morris et al. 2002) by validating a hedonic/utilitarian DMH model. Another contribution concerns the link between consumer’s thoughts and the utilitarian dimension of attitude, as well as between consumer’s emotions and the hedonic dimension of attitude in the virtual environment. These relationships have been theoretically stated but not empirically tested. An additional contribution involves the measurement of emotions following a protocol similar to that used for thoughts. Finally, these results involve important implications for marketers. They can assess more concisely their websites’ communication effectiveness. As long as they identify what kind of responses their consumers generate, they can get clues about
the factors that have made their strategies end up in success or failure. The relative importance of each dimension will provide marketers with insights about whether to introduce emotional appeals or cognitive stimuli when communicating through their websites.

References

**Brand Names and Figures of Speech: Something to Learn from Aristotle?**
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Brand names are important marketing tools given that when effective, they can enhance awareness and create favorable impressions for a product (Aaker 1991; Aaker and Keller 1990; Keller 1998). Indeed brand names are not merely labels assigned to products but rather they can convey information about products and elicit certain meanings on the part of consumers (Zinkhan and Martin 1987). Not surprisingly, companies spend millions of dollars in relation to the development and maintenance of their brand names.

Recently, marketing researchers have begun to explore the role of brands and their meaning in the domain of linguistics (Brendl et al. 2005; Klink 2000, 2001; Miller and Kahn 2005; Yorkston and Mello 2005; Yorkston and Menon 2004). This work has shown that the phonetic characteristics of a brand name can elicit certain meanings for consumers (through sound symbolism) and that these meanings in turn influence consumers’ attitudes and evaluations of products. Thus, the linguistic elements of brand names can have a cognitive influence on product evaluations. However, Aristotle suggests that figurative language (i.e., linguistics) can create affective responses, and neuroscience research has found that brand names engage the right-hand (emotional) side of the brain more than other words (Gontijo et al. 2002). Thus, it is possible that brand names comprised of figurative language may influence product evaluations through affect. The purpose of the present research is to determine across two experiments whether brand names with certain phonetic characteristics (figures of speech) influence product evaluations due to the positive affect they may create. Furthermore, we explore the moderating roles of consumers’ affect intensity and mode of processing used when exposed to the brand names.

In his discussion on the origins of poetry, Aristotle identified the role of harmony (pleasing sounds) and imitation (representation of reality). Importantly, he referred to harmony as the enjoyment that words elicited through their sounds (Fergusson 1961). Given that figurative language (also referred to a rhetorical figures and figures of speech) often consists of elements such as rhythm, rhymes, and repetition which create melody to stimulate and please the ear (Stern 1990), we expect that the sound arising from brand names, and in particular those comprised of figurative language (as compared to neutral words), will elicit positive affect. Further, we expect this affect will positively influence brand evaluations (e.g., Adaval 2003; Shiv and Fedorikhin 1999). The effects are predicted to be further
moderated by affect intensity (Larsen and Diener 1987). Due to the fact that high affect intensity individuals are sensitive to emotionally stimuli we expect that they will evaluate a brand name consisting of figurative language more favorably when the mode of processing is auditory (vs. visual). In contrast, low affect intensity individuals evaluations of the figurative brand are not expected to differ regardless of whether they say the word (auditory) or see it (visual). Based on previous findings (Moore and Harris 1996) we do not expect that the two affect intensity groups will differ in their evaluations of neutral brand names regardless of the mode of processing.

In study 1, participants were provided with a sample of two purportedly different brands of ice cream to evaluate. Two different pairs of brand names were selected to provide generalizability. One brand name in each pair contained figure of speech components (i.e., alliteration) whereas the other brand name was neutral and did not contain figurative language. Prior to testing the samples, participants in the visual condition were shown the name of the first ice cream, tasted it and then repeated the process for the second sample. Those participants in the auditory condition were asked to read the first ice cream name out loud, tasted it, and then repeated the process for the second sample. Unknown to participants, the samples were from the same container of ice cream. After tasting both ice samples, they completed a questionnaire to measure brand evaluations and affective reactions to each brand.

Results demonstrated that participants had the highest level of brand evaluations and experienced the most positive affect in the auditory condition when the brand name was figurative as compared to the other conditions (auditory and neutral, visual and figurative, visual and neutral). Finally, mediation analysis demonstrated that the effects on product evaluations were driven by the consumers’ positive affect.

Study 2 used the same procedure with two noteworthy changes. First, affect intensity (Larsen and Diener 1987) was measured in the questionnaire. Second, a second pair of brand names was used to enhance the generalizability of the findings. The results of the analysis revealed that as predicted participants who were high in affect intensity evaluated the product more favorably when the brand name was figurative and they voiced the name (i.e., auditory condition) as compared to only read it (i.e., visual condition). Further, these participants evaluated the brand more favorably when they voiced the name and the brand was a figurative name as compared to neutral. In contrast, low affect intensity participants’ evaluations of the brand were more favorable when the brand name was figurative as compared to neutral but did not differ based on the mode of processing. Additional analysis again demonstrated the mediating role of positive affect. In sum it appears that we had something to learn from Aristotle after all.

References

Dysfunctional Behavior of Some Customers and the Impact on the Service Experience of Others
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It is evident that customers can affect one another indirectly by being part of the same environment or more directly through specific interpersonal encounters (Martin, 1996). Other customer failure is said to happen when any action by another customer has a negative
impact on one’s service experience (Tax, Colgate and Brown, 2006). While prior research provides evidence (e.g., Grove and Fisk, 1997) that other customers sharing a service environment negatively influenced one’s satisfaction, none of these studies focused specifically on answering how one attributes other customer’s misbehavior to the firm’s responsibility. The purpose of this research is to investigate this link, to predict what sort of attribution leads to a firm’s assumed responsibility in case of other customer failure, and how this responsibility relates to the recovery expectation and satisfaction of the customer.

A customer’s evaluation of the service may not only be affected by other customer’s misbehavior but also by how employees react to help solve the problem (Bitner, 1990). Although perceived employee effort (Mohr and Bitner, 1995) and level of remedy (Widmier and Jackson, 2002) has been tested individually in past service research, few studies have used both constructs within a single model to determine their relative effects. Additionally, their impacts on satisfaction evaluations within the context of other customer failures are neglected. The conceptual model thus includes both perceived employee effort and level of remedy as two process factors, to explore their relative influence on a customer’s evaluation of service satisfaction.

Methods
A sample of 180 consumers participated in this study. One hundred two female and 78 male, ranging in age from 20 to 57 years, with a median age of 34 years, were asked to recall an earlier negative experience that was caused by another customer in a service setting. Each was instructed as follows, “Please describe an experience from your own life in which you were dissatisfied with the delivery of a service because it was affected by another customer. Describe this experience in sufficient detail so that any reader will understand from your description why you were dissatisfied.” Next, the following open-ended questions were asked: “What kind of service was involved?” and “How long ago did it happen?” Providing a detailed description of the experience helped the participant to remember more accurately what actually happened and to relive the experience. Although this procedure does not overcome all possible shortcomings related to the use of retrospective life accounts, it has been successfully applied in current service failure research (e.g., Zeelenberg and Pieters, 2004).

The second part of the questionnaire contained a set of closed-ended questions. Controllability attributions, stability attributions, firm responsibility, recovery expectations, perceived employee effort, levels of remedy and satisfaction were measured by adapting the scales used by Wirtz and Mattila (2004), Mohr and Bitner (1995), and Widmier and Jackson’s (2002) study. All items used a Likert-type 7-point response scale, ranging from not at all (1) to very strongly (7).

Results
First, a content analysis was performed on the open-ended questions that touched on the failures caused by other customers. Thirteen questionnaires were dropped because the failures described were actually caused by the service providers. Participants reported other customer failures with a wide variety of service firms, which we categorized as follows: restaurants, stores, theaters, transportation, hotels, banks, post office, and others. On average, participants reported failures that were caused by other customers had happened 2 months earlier.

Reliability and construct validity of the measures were examined before structural model analysis. All analyses were conducted using maximum likelihood estimation in LISREL 8.50. The confirmatory factor analysis results demonstrated an adequate model fit. Composite reliabilities were high and exceeded the minimal acceptable level of .70. Convergent validity was assessed by the magnitude of the factor loading of each manifest indicator on its proposed latent construct. All loadings were high (above .60) and significant, thus convergent validity was indicated. Discriminant validity was assessed using Anderson’s (1987) criterion. This criterion is satisfied for all construct pairs.

Next, the structural model analysis was conducted to examine the hypothesized relationships among constructs. In terms of model fit, there was a reasonable model fit.

Controllability attributions for other customer failure were positively related to a firm’s responsibility, indicating support for Hypothesis 1. However, stability attributions for other customer failure were insignificantly related to a firm’s responsibility. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is not supported. The results provided support for both Hypotheses 3 and 4. Hypothesis 3 proposed that a firm’s responsibility for other customer failure has a negative impact on customer satisfaction, and Hypothesis 4 proposed that a firm’s responsibility has a positive impact on customer’s recovery expectation.

Hypothesis 5 argued for a negative relationship between recovery expectation and customer satisfaction. However, the study found an insignificant link. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 is not supported. Perceived employee effort was hypothesized to positively affect customer satisfaction (H6). The result confirms this relationship. Thus, Hypotheses 6 is strongly supported. Additionally, customer satisfaction was found to have a negative effect on customer complaint behavior, indicating support for Hypothesis 7. The results also provide support for Hypothesis 8 that the level of redress has a positive impact on customer satisfaction when other customer failure occurs.

H9 hypothesized that the effect of perceived employee effort on customer satisfaction is significantly stronger than the effect of the level of remedy on customer satisfaction when other customer failure occurs. To empirically test this hypothesis, a chi-square difference test was conducted. The results of the chi-square difference test support Hypothesis 9.

Conclusions
Our results show several important findings. First, people consider another customer’s failure to be the firm’s responsibility when they perceive that the failure is under the firm’s volitional control (i.e., controllability attribution), but not whether the failure will recur or not (i.e., stability attributions). This responsibility attribution then leads to customers’ expectation of recovery and dissatisfaction. In addition, both perceived employee effort and level of remedy have a positive impact on customer satisfaction. More specifically, the former has a greater influence on satisfaction than the latter.

References
A dazzling array of spiritual lifestyles are available to today’s consumer. This study argues that these spiritual tastes and practices can operate as valuable cultural markers, offering one means by which consumers may create cultural and social distinction for themselves in today’s increasingly saturated symbolic universe. Accordingly, the current study ethnographically explores the production, consumption, conversion, valuation and investment of spiritual capital in one particular spiritual subculture: ‘Spirituality in the Pub’.

Spirituality, or the search for connection with the divine, may take the form of either religious or non-religious beliefs and behaviours, and involves the accumulation of skills, tastes, practices, artifacts and sometimes qualifications which the individual acquires during his or her spiritual journey. Both individually and collectively within a social group, these acquisitions can provide valuable cultural resources for the social construction of meaning (Besecke 2001). As a form of valued resource, or ‘capital’, these positional spiritual goods have come to be termed ‘spiritual capital’ (Berger and Hefner 2003; Finke 2003; Lambert 1992; Lillard and Ogaki 2006; Malloch 2003; Verter 2003; Voas 2006; Woodberry 2003).

Yet, not all spiritual goods are equally valued by all believers. By adopting and translating Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital within the context of a specific spiritual subculture (reflecting Thornton’s (1996) concept of ‘subcultural capital’), this study argues that certain spiritual tastes and practices may act as valuable positional goods in the competition for symbolic power, or recognition, within a specific spiritual subculture (Stolz 2006; Verter 1997; 2003; Ward 2003). Such cultural resources may not necessarily be valued within mainstream culture, yet within the spiritual subculture they can possess powerful effects. Acting as a valuable source of symbolic capital, spiritual capital may affect the standing of the individual within a spiritual subculture just as cultural capital affects one’s standing within society as a whole (Thornton 1996).

Following Verter’s (2003) adaptation of Bourdieu, this study recognizes spiritual capital as existing in three forms: Firstly, spiritual capital is *embodied* in the knowledge, abilities, dispositions, and tastes an individual has amassed in the field of spirituality. Thus, within a specific subfield, a preference for chanting over prayer may be considered a form of embodied spiritual capital, as could the ability to interpret biblical passages or communicate with spirits. Secondly, spiritual capital is *objectified* in the material goods which carry symbolic value in the spiritual subculture (eg: sacred texts, crystals, incense, and ritual clothing). Objectified spiritual capital enables the display of its embodied form through the public consumption of these objects in a manner which confirms the individual’s mastery of the ‘appropriate’ spiritual skills. Finally, spiritual capital can be *institutionalized* via the acquisition of qualifications from spiritual organisations such as churches, spiritual orders, religious colleges, and other centres of spiritual study, thus confirming and legitimizing the embodied spiritual capital of the individual.

**Spirituality in the Pub**

The present study is exploring spiritual capital within the subcultural context of ‘Spirituality in the Pub’. This multi-faith group of individuals come together monthly in an inner-city pub to discuss issues of spiritual relevance to their lives. In addition to members from the Anglican, Catholic, Uniting and Salvation Army churches, Muslims, Jesuits, Buddhists, and Jews are also represented, as well as those from ‘New Age’ and indigenous faith traditions. This diversity of spiritual backgrounds provides a rich symbolic context in which the production, consumption and negotiation of spiritual capital is occurring. Within this ethnographic context, the present study is exploring three main theoretical arguments. These centre on the processes of conversion, valuation, and investment of spiritual capital.

Firstly, if spiritual tastes and practices can indeed be considered ‘capital’ in the Bourdieuan sense, then it may arguably be converted into other forms of capital, including economic capital. Several theorists have sought to quantitatively measure the effect of individual and community levels of spiritual capital on the accumulation of economic capital, exploring both direct means such as employment within a church organization, and more indirect means such as the acquisition of a spiritually-inspired productive work ethic (See Iannaccone 1998 for an extensive review of related studies; see also Lillard and Ogaki 2006; Malloch 2003; Peat 2005; Weber 1976 [1905]; Woodberry 2003). Yet despite this growing interest in the economic consequences of spirituality, little is known about the actual mechanisms by which a relationship between spirituality and the market may operate (Malloch 2003). In response, this study proffers a Bourdieuan approach...
to understanding the complex systems and practices by which spiritual capital and other forms of capital may be related, depicting spirituality as an aesthetic taste which is complexly interrelated with other forms of capital within specific fields of power.

Secondly, unlike its economic counterpart, ‘spiritual capital is not a stable currency’ (Verter 2003, p.159). Due to its highly symbolic nature, the value of spiritual currency is in constant flux, subject to the fluctuations of the spiritual market and its players. This instability is particularly salient in a ‘sub-field of restricted cultural production’ (Bourdieu 1993, p.185) such as SIP, where cultural goods are produced by producers for their own consumption, rather than for consumption on the mass-market (the ‘sub-field of large-scale production’, 1993, p.186). In a sub-field of restricted production, producers develop their own criteria for the evaluation of their cultural goods. These criteria are a source of struggle for control over the right to define legitimate cultural forms. Thus, this study is exploring the processes by which members of the subcultural group identify and co-direct their sources of spiritual capital.

Finally, in the same way that individuals adopt certain economic investment strategies, they also pursue both conscious and unconscious ‘investment strategies’ for other more symbolic forms of capital (Bourdieu 1986). Thus, heeding Arnould and Thompson (2005, p.876), this study explores how consumers select the investment strategies that guide their accumulation of spiritual capital, allocating spiritual, economic, and cultural capital resources between competing spiritual market offerings.

As such, this study responds to calls for further research into ‘the micropolitics of consumption’ as a basis for affiliation and distinction in everyday life (Holt 1998, p.22).

References

The Interpretation of ‘Open Text’ Advertisements
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There has been a noticeable shift in print advertisements from functional to symbolic approaches as the use of rhetorical style in magazine advertisements has grown progressively more complex and elaborated over time (O’Donohoe, 2001). Thus the interpretation of brands and marketing communication has become extremely challenging, mainly due to the plethora of available cultural meanings and interpretive perspectives in combination with the instability of social categories (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Holt, 2002; Kates, 2002). The aim of this paper is to examine print advertising interpretation by different ‘interpreting communities’, in order to empirically explore how audiences interpret ‘open’ advertisements.
Multiple Readings

Empirical studies have not only established the existence of multiple readings of advertisements (Elliott, Eccles and Hodgson, 1993, Elliott and Ritson, 1995, Mick and Buhl, 1992), but they have also suggested that ambiguity and complex, non-anchored rhetorical figures may increase elaboration, because the consumer must figure out the advertisement’s message (McQuarrie and Mick, 1999; Mothersbaugh, Huhman and Franke, 2002; Warlaumont, 1995). Increased elaboration in turn may increase the memorability of the advertisement (Kardes, 1998). In addition, consumers’ pleasure in solving the puzzle of a rhetorical figure can lead to increased attention (McQuarrie and Mick, 1996) and a positive attitude towards the advertisement (McQuarrie and Mick, 1992; Peracchio and Meyers-Levy, 1994). In contrast, advertisements that explicitly spell out the meaning of a rhetorical figure to consumers may lead to dislike of the advertisement (Phillips, 2000).

Open and Closed Texts

Advertising is consumed in a society composed of a variety of groups with different, often conflicting interests, requiring its texts to be what Eco (1979) calls open’. By this he means texts that do not attempt to close off alternative meanings and restrict their focus to one, easily attainable meaning.

This does not, however, imply that reading is completely idiosyncratic. In contrast, reader-response theorists believe that reading is based on collective conventions and that groups of readers can share certain reading strategies, allowing for the possibility of grouping similar readings and shared responses (Scott, 1994a).

Interpretive Communities

One way of achieving this, is through the concept of ‘interpretive communities’, which was introduced by Fish (1980) and proposes that it is “Interpretive communities…that produce meanings…Interpretive communities are made up of those who share interpretive strategies…” (p. 14). Regarding advertising, interpretive communities have been envisioned as a cultural formation with a shared social and historical context that results in similar interpretations (Elliott and Ritson, 1997; Schroder, 1994). As a result, the current study examines interpretive communities based on gender and social class.

Gender and Interpretation of Advertising

Gender differences in meaning interpretation of advertisements has been previously reported by Mick and Politi (1989) where males and females interpreted advertising visuals in noticeably different ways. Also Elliott and Jones (1995) found considerable differences in the way males and females responded to overt sexuality in advertising.

Social Class and Interpretive Codes

Consumers of different social classes code reality, language, products and advertisements in different ways (Durgee, 1986). Research by Bernstein (1973) on social relationships and linguistic patterns among middle and working class London school children, found two code types, restricted codes and elaborated codes.

Their implications for consumer behavior and advertising interpretation suggest that lower class consumers may perceive products based on their implied meanings and rely on context for their evaluation. They may prefer advertisements that use literal and concrete language and convey an image of a gratifying world in which products fit functionally into the drive for a stable and secure life. On the other hand, middle and upper class consumers may be more attuned to subtle differences of design and style and prefer appeals to more distant benefits, through the use of more symbolic and abstract language (Durgee, 1986).

Method

A reader-response approach was adopted since it emphasizes the meanings that consumers draw from advertisements (McQuarrie and Mick, 1999; Mick and Politi, 1989; Scott 1994). We conducted 40 in-depth interviews in the U.K. with working and middle class participants within the age range of eighteen to sixty years old. Ten advertisements were selected, mainly from magazines, but also other types of print advertisement, such as posters and billboards, based on their open versus closed approach to meaning and on the product categories whose target groups’ correspond to the audience of the research. The concepts emerged were analyzed using the interpretive thematic analysis technique (Spiggle 1994).

Findings

The analysis suggests that not only do participants of different gender read the advertisements differently but in some cases the emergence of different theme patterns would occur. More specifically, when shown a print advertisement for Absolut Vodka, a romantic theme for women and a friendship theme for men became prominent:

“…I am thinking of a romantic weekend with my boyfriend to the Scottish mountains…”

(female participant, 27 years old)

“This ad takes me to a ski resort, where after skiing… I catch up with my mates…and enjoy our time away from city life…”

(male participant, 31 years old)

It has been also noted that participants of different social classes interpret print advertisements differently. Participants from the working class used simple language and responded better to uncomplicated and implicit meanings.

In responding to an open Chanel ad for the male perfume Egoiste
“It’s a guy using a perfume”

But participants from the middle class used elaborated, rich language and enjoyed talking about implied meanings and how these could be seen in different contexts:

“A young, good looking, well built, successful…person… going through an internal battle, maybe comes face to face with his other self, a selfish self, probably his dark side …”

Thus this study provides insights into how people interpret advertisements and explores through the use of reader-response theory, the symbolic meanings that are drawn by them when consuming an advertisement. These findings present implications for designing marketing communications, with regards to the search and formation of different strategies concerning positioning and brand relationships, towards more flexible, multidimensional tactics and ambiguous messages, in order to be successfully communicated to multiple target groups conceptualized as ‘interpretive communities’.

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Who Cares More?
Consumers’ Perceived Unfairness of Targeted Promotions
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Who (present or prospective customers) will care more about targeted promotions, and how the perceptions of unfairness influence purchase intentions? To address the above questions, we propose a framework for the antecedents and consequences of the perceptions of unfairness of targeted promotions. This framework is composed of two parts. The first part is to examine the effects of customer types (present vs. prospective customers) and preferential conditions (an advantaged inequity vs. a disadvantaged condition) on consumers’ perceived unfairness. The second part is to examine the cognitive and affective influences of the perceived unfairness on purchase intentions through the perceived value and negative emotions.

The motivations of this research are two. First, most previous research concerning targeted promotions has been from a firms’ perspective of exploring competitive implications of targeted promotions and optimal targeting strategies (e.g., Fruchter and Zhang 2002; Shaffer and Zhang 1995). Little research has been done that discusses targeted promotions from the consumers’ perspective or that examines the consumers’ psychological reactions (i.e., perceived unfairness, perceived value, and emotional reactions) to targeted promotions. Second, much previous research has shown that price promotions are effective in encouraging customers to buy promoted products (e.g., Inman and McAlister 1993; Grewal, Monroe, and Krishnan 1998). However, targeted promotions, which differ from price promotions, provide promotions only for specific targeted customer segments. In such cases, do targeted promotions reduce non-targeted customers’ purchasing intentions if non-targeted customers realize that they have to pay more money for the same product or service than targeted customers? That is, are there any negative effects induced by targeted promotions? If yes, will the negative effects of targeted promotions be different by targeting either present customers or prospective customers? These two questions are crucial when we attempt to figure out how effective targeted promotions are in marketing programs and how well these targeted promotions are implemented.

This research may contribute to three streams of literature. One is related to reference of perceived price unfairness, with most early research on price unfairness focusing on self/self comparison (e.g., Campbell 1999; Kahneman, Knetsch, and Thaler 1986b; Urbany, Madden and Dickson 1999). They have neglected the effects of the prices paid by others on the focal customers’ perceived unfairness, namely self/other comparisons. In the last decade, some studies (e.g., Feinberg, Krishna, and Zhang 2002; Martins 1995) tried to examine consumers’ perceived unfairness based on a self/other comparison. However, none of them focused on both present and prospective customers’ comparisons.

The second stream of literature is related to the outcomes of perceived price unfairness. Perceived price unfairness is considered as an important psychological factor in consumer behavior (Campbell 1999; Martins 1995; Xia, Monroe, and Cox 2004). It influences consumers’ reactions to prices (Kahneman, Knetsch, and Thaler 1986a, b). Much of consumer research has been predominately cognitive in nature, and the role of affect has received insufficient attention (Shiv and Fedorikhin 1999). The research on the outcomes of perceived unfairness is no exception. Thus, this research will concurrently examine perceived value (i.e., cognitive outcomes) and negative emotions (i.e., affective outcomes) of perceived price unfairness.

The third stream of literature is related to customer relationship management (CRM). CRM places emphasis on maintaining good relationships with customers. Gift-giving is one of the effective ways used in CRM. Targeted promotions can be viewed as gifts offered by firms to individual customers (e.g., B2C (businesses to customers) gift-giving). In the individual to individual gift-giving literature, Ruth, Otnes, and Brunel (1999) indicated that the misuse of gift giving may result in negative consequences, such as a deteriorating relationship between gift giver and gift receiver. In the B2C situation, this research expects that the misuse of targeted promotions might cause deterioration in customer relationships. Thus, it is important to design targeted promotions in order to send appropriate gifts to different customer segments. Traditionally, it is assumed that present customers are loyal and less price-sensitive than prospective customers (Nagle and Holden 2002). Based on this rationale, the practice seems to reflect a strategy of targeting the more price-sensitive segment (i.e., prospective customers). This practice will be counter to the CRM that retaining present customers is more profitable than soliciting new customers. Thus, this research attempts to resolve the questions of who (i.e., present or prospective customers) should be favored in order to attenuate negative effects of targeted promotions.

To test our hypotheses, a laboratory experiment was conducted to collect empirical data with membership in a fitness center as the targeted product. This experiment design was a 2 (customer types: present vs. prospective customers) x 2 (Preferential conditions: advantaged inequity vs. disadvantaged inequity) between-subject design. In total, 104 subjects were used to test our hypotheses. An ANOVA was used to analyze the effect of customer types and preferential conditions on consumers’ perceived unfairness, whereas a Structural Equation Model (SEM) was used to test the mediating effect of perceived value and negative emotions between the perceived unfairness and purchase intentions.

The findings of this research have important theoretical and practical implications. This research, first, finds that the perceived unfairness cognitively and affectively influences purchase intentions through perceived value and negative emotions. Affective reactions (i.e., negative emotions) of perceived unfairness are as important as cognitive reactions (i.e., perceived value) of perceived unfairness. This research provides evidence to support Xia, Monroe, and Cox’s (2004) conceptual framework about cognitive and affective outcomes of perceived unfairness.

Another finding of this research is that present customers exhibit higher unfair perceptions than prospective customers when facing the disadvantaged condition. However, when facing the advantaged condition, the perceived unfairness of present and prospective customers is no different. The findings provide additional evidence to support the belief that present customers should be more highly valued than prospective customers. This is consistent with the arguments of customer relationship management (Winer 2001).

Finally, we find that guilt, uneasiness, and feelings of shame, are not good indicators of negative emotions to reflect advantaged customers’ emotions. Instead, satisfaction, pleasure and happiness are main emotions that were induced by advantaged conditions. This finding contrasts with Xia, Monroe, and Cox (2004), who proposed that the feelings of guilt, uneasiness, and shame were induced under
the advantaged condition. But these finding are consistent with Van de Bos, Peters, Bobocel, and Ybema (2005), who showed that satisfaction, pleasure, and happiness accompany advantaged unfairness.

This research has important practical implications. According to traditional perspectives, price discrimination should favor price-sensitive customers (i.e., prospective customers). However, from the perspective of perceived price unfairness, we found that when the targeted promotions favor prospective customers, present customers will have strong perceived price unfairness and, in turn, cognitively and affectively reduced purchase intentions through perceived value and negative emotions. Thus, special attention should be paid to the negative effects of targeted promotions. On the other hand, when the targeted promotions favor present customers, both present and prospective customers show less unfair perceptions. Therefore, we suggest that managers should pay additional attention to present customers’ perceived unfairness in order to maintain good relationships. However, when relatively low prices are necessary to attract prospective customers, we suggest that firms create a type of “segmentation fence”, where present customers are exposed as little as possible to special offers designed to attract prospective customers.

References


**Predictive Validity of the Cognitive Basis of Implicit Attitudes**

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An attitude, i.e. an overall positive or negative evaluation of an object, can be influenced both by affective and cognitive associations (Fabrigar et al., 2005). The affective component of an attitude corresponds to the summed valence of specific emotions and feelings associated with the attitude object and the cognitive component contains the negative and positive beliefs about the object. These cognitive and affective bases of attitudes can contribute directly and separately to behavioral responses (Dubé et al., 2003).

Recent dual-process theories in social psychology further suggest that deliberate, “explicit” attitudes should be contrasted with automatic, “implicit” attitudes (Gawronski and Bodenhausen, 2006; Wilson et al., 2000). According to these models, implicit attitudes are the outcome of associative processes and explicit attitudes the outcome of propositional processes. So far, efforts to distinguish the affective and cognitive bases of attitudes have been limited to explicit attitudes. Most researchers consider implicit attitudes as being only influenced by affective associations (Gawronski and Bodenhausen, 2006). However, an implicit attitude can be characterized as the automatic evaluative reaction resulting from the particular associations that are automatically activated when one encounters the attitude object and we see no theoretical reason why those associations should be reduced to evaluative associations. Indeed, evaluative associations are not necessarily more accessible than non-evaluative associations (Giner-Sorolla, 2004) and experiments on semantic priming suggest that non-evaluative associations can be automatically activated. Moreover, Perkins and Forehand (2006) showed that both valence and semantic meaning contribute to the result of the Implicit Association Test (IAT) (Greenwald et al., 1998) which is the
measurement technique the most widely used to assess implicit attitudes. In this paper, we present two experiments that assessed the predictive validity of the cognitive basis of implicit attitudes.

In the first experiment we measured part of the cognitive bases of explicit and implicit attitudes towards two brands and we assessed their relative predictive value on choice intention. 198 students participated in this experiment on the effects of marketing communication (in this case event sponsorship) on explicit and implicit beliefs toward the brands (i.e. the cognitive basis of attitudes) and on choice intention. Each subject was exposed to several brands among which two target brands (Canon and Nikon). One of the target brands was presented as sponsor of a tennis tournament and the other not (counterbalanced). Following a pretest, we decided to test whether the sponsoring brand is perceived as being stronger than the non-sponsoring brand. Implicit belief was measured with the IAT and explicit belief was measured with self-report scales. In the IAT, items belonging to four categories (‘Canon’, ‘Nikon’, ‘Weak’ and ‘Strong’) are categorized as quickly as possible and the response latencies provide a measure of relative perceived strength between Canon and Nikon. We computed a similar differential score for the explicit belief. Because ‘strong’ has a positive connotation and ‘weak’ has a negative connotation and to avoid any confounding effects between an IAT assessing meaning and an IAT assessing valence we controlled the valence of the terms used in the IAT. The choice task was a forced choice between a Canon camera and a Nikon camera.

As expected, we found that the sponsoring brand is perceived as being stronger than the non-sponsoring brand and that, both explicitly and implicitly. We performed several logistic regressions on choice as outcome and found that both explicit and implicit beliefs have a statistically significant influence on brand choice intention (p<0.01 for all likelihood-ratio tests and Nagelkerke R² of the model with explicit and implicit beliefs=0.36). Nevertheless, explicit belief has a stronger predictive value than implicit belief (standardized odds ratios of 3.23 versus 1.88). This is expected for controlled behavior compared to more spontaneous behavior.

61 subjects participated in the second experiment. In this experiment we measured part of the cognitive bases of explicit and implicit attitudes toward apples and chocolate along with explicit and implicit attitudes (counterbalanced) and assessed their relative predictive value on actual choice. Following the recommendations of Olson and Fazio (2004), implicit attitude was measured with an IAT using the categories ‘apples’, ‘chocolate’, ‘I like’ and ‘I don’t like’ and the cognitive basis of implicit attitude was assessed (partially) with an IAT using the categories ‘apples’, ‘chocolate’, ‘I find healthy’ and ‘I don’t find healthy’. Here again we controlled the valence of the items used in the “cognitive IAT”. Explicit attitudes and the cognitive basis of explicit attitudes toward apples and chocolate were assessed with self-report scales. The choice task was a real choice between apples and chocolate bars.

The correlation between “the cognitive basis of implicit attitude” and “implicit attitude” is statistically significant but the shared variance only equals 27.7 % (Pearson r=0.526, p<0.01). This illustrates the discriminant validity of the two concepts and nevertheless indicates that an implicit attitude is linked to cognitive associations. Several logistic regressions were performed on actual choice (apple versus chocolate) as outcome. The only statistically significant predictors are explicit attitude and the cognitive basis of implicit attitude=0.43. This illustrates the discriminant validity of the two concepts and nevertheless indicates that an implicit attitude is linked to cognitive associations. The correlation between “the cognitive basis of implicit attitude” and “implicit attitude” is statistically significant but the shared variance only equals 27.7 % (Pearson r=0.526, p<0.01). This illustrates the discriminant validity of the two concepts and nevertheless indicates that an implicit attitude is linked to cognitive associations. Several logistic regressions were performed on actual choice (apple versus chocolate) as outcome. The only statistically significant predictors are explicit attitude and the cognitive basis of implicit attitude=0.43. This illustrates the discriminant validity of the two concepts and nevertheless indicates that an implicit attitude is linked to cognitive associations.

In conclusion, we found that the cognitive basis of implicit attitude can improve the prediction of behavior even in cases when implicit attitude and the cognitive basis of explicit attitude have no predictive value. Hence, it seems important to further study the cognitive but also affective bases of implicit attitudes. We are currently performing experiments to better understand the moderators of the relationships between the bases of implicit attitude, explicit attitude and behavior.

References
Brand Loyalty in the Mobile Phones Market: The Role of Self-Image Congruence and Selected Marketing Mix Elements
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The purpose of this research is to explore the effect of self-image congruence and consumer perceptions of distribution intensity, advertising spending and price promotions on brand loyalty within the mobile phone market. A review of consumer behaviour literature suggests that brands have personal image attributes, which reflect the stereotype of generalized users of that brand. During the consumption process, this product or service user image interacts with the consumer’s self-concept generating a subjective experience referred to as self-image congruence (Graeff 1996; Sirgy et al. 1982, 1997). If the brand related information is inconsistent with the consumers’ self-concept, then it is unlikely to gain consumers’ attention, acceptance, and retention (Heath and Scott, 1998). Prior research has tested the relationship between self-image congruence and consumers’ brand preferences, purchase intentions, word of mouth recommendations, product use, brand choice, attitudes and satisfaction towards products (Ericksen 1996; Sirgy et al. 1997, 1991; Jamal and Al-Marri, 2007; Jamal, 2004; Jamal and Goode, 2001). However, to the best of our knowledge, the relationship between self-image congruence and loyalty has never been tested.

We focus on loyalty because it is an important theoretical as well as practical issue for researchers and practitioners (Aaker, 1992: Jones and Sasser, 1995; Uncles and Dowling, 1998; Reichheld, 1996). Firms are often interested in increasing loyalty levels because it offers significant benefits such as reduction of marketing costs (Aaker, 1991), more opportunities for brand extensions and a potential increase in market shares (Buzell et al., 1975; Buzell and Gale, 1987). Moreover, increased levels of loyalty may lead to more favourable word of mouth, greater resistance among loyal consumers to competitive strategies (Dick and Basu, 1994) and lower levels of price sensitivity among consumers (Keller, 1993; Reichheld, 1996, Rundle-Thiele and Mackay, 2001). Despite tremendous interest in loyalty, very little empirical research has addressed which specific marketing mix activities lead to loyalty (Yoo and Donthu 2002; Yoo et al., 2000). It is of extreme significance for brand managers to understand whether their distribution policies, price promotions and advertising are helping or hurting their brands in terms of increasing or decreasing sales and/or loyalty (see for example, Mela et al., 1997). The paper aims to contribute towards the existing literature by proposing and testing a conceptual framework, which combines the effects of self image congruence and consumer perceptions of marketing mix efforts on brand loyalty.

The framework was tested within the mobile phone market. The market for mobile phones has expanded at an incredible rate over the last five years with many countries displaying growth rates of 20 to 30%. The market is also sufficiently deep enough to account for a great deal of variation in terms of pricing, quality, market share, corporate reputation and marketing strategies. Six mobile phone brands were chosen carefully as product stimuli: Nokia, Siemens, Samsung, Motorola, Sony Ericsson, L.G., and Alcatel. These brands represented different market shares, pricing strategies, branding and marketing strategies. Using a self-administered questionnaire, data was collected from a convenience sample of mobile phone users in Doha, Qatar. After eliminating the incomplete responses, 265 eligible responses were left for analysis. Out of the 265 responses, 102 (38.5%) identified themselves as pay-as-you go users whereas 163 (61.5%) identified themselves as pay-monthly contract users. Overall, the sample is primarily aged 20-39 (76.2%); 56.2% single and 41.5% married; highly educated (58.1% holding university degrees), Qatari nationals (64.9%), mainly students (47.5%) and employees/professionals (33.2%), and 49.4% males and 50.6% females.

Confirmatory factor analysis using Amos 4.01 was conducted to test the validity of measures used in the study (Byrne, 2001). The resulting measurement model was ??265 =140.570, p=0.000, Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) =0.93; Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI) =0.90; Comparative-Fit-Index (CFI) =0.96; Incremental Fit Index (IFI)=0.96; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)= 0.54, which indicated a good fit. Cronbach alpha coefficients were then computed to quantify the scale reliabilities of the factors identified and were 0.78 (self image congruence), 0.86 (brand loyalty), 0.67 (distribution intensity), 0.74 (price deals) and 0.69 (advertising spending). The reliabilities ranged from 0.67 to 0.86, indicating that all the scales used in this study were acceptable and reliable (Nunnally, 1978). Structural equation modelling was used to estimate parameters of the hypothesized model, which specified self-employee congruence, distribution intensity, price deals, advertising spending as exogenous constructs and brand loyalty as endogenous construct. Goodness-of-fit statistics, indicating the overall acceptability of the structural model analyzed, were acceptable: ??265 =140.6, p=0.000, Degrees of Freedom= 80; GFI =0.94; AGFI=0.90; CFI =0.96; IFI=0.96; RMSEA= 0.54. As hypothesised, self-employee congruence (parameter estimate=0.296, t value=4.523) and consumer perceptions of distribution intensity (parameter estimate=0.409, t value=2.216) were significantly and positively related to brand loyalty. Similarly, consumer perceptions of price deals (parameter estimate=0.642, t value=3.839) and advertising spending (parameter estimate=0.201, t value=2.199) were also significantly related to brand loyalty. However, contrary to our expectations price promotions were positively related to brand loyalty and advertising spending were negatively related to brand loyalty. Subsequently, we estimated four regression equations to investigate the moderating effect of self image congruence on the relationship between different marketing mix elements and brand loyalty using mean centred data (Hair al el., 1998; Aiken and West, 1991). Findings revealed no moderating effect of self image congruence on the relationship between distribution intensity and brand loyalty and between advertising spending and brand loyalty. However, self image congruence was a negative moderator of the relationship between price deals and brand loyalty.

In conclusion, the paper makes three important contributions to the existing literature. First, the paper, with the help of an empirical research, demonstrates that self-image congruence is an important predictor of brand loyalty in the mobile phone market. Second, the paper demonstrates that consumers are likely to show higher levels of brand loyalty when a brand is available in a greater number of stores. Third, the paper demonstrates that, contrary to the commonly held assumptions, consumers’ perceptions of price promotions are positively related to brand loyalty. Fourth, the paper demonstrates that consumers’ perceptions of money spent on advertising are negatively related to brand loyalty.

Our findings have some important implications for brand managers within the mobile phones market. In today’s highly competitive business environment, the way a brand is positioned in terms of brand images is extremely important (Arnold 1992; Bhat and Reddy, 1998;
Park et al. 1986). Given the findings of this research, brand managers should consider utilising advertising appeals that are congruent with viewers’ self-concepts and that can activate consumers self concept (Graeff, 1996; Hong and Zinkhan 1995). Our respondents appeared to feel happy when mobile phones were available in greater number of stores. This might be because they benefited from an increase in convenience and time utility (Yoo et al, 2000 and Yoo and Donthu, 2002). Hence, brand managers can benefit by utilising intensive distribution strategy. Furthermore, our findings suggest that as perceptions of price promotions improve, brand loyalty as reflected through their commitment to the brand also goes up. This might be because the respondents in our study perceived mobile phones as utilitarian products and therefore valued the savings, quality and convenience benefits leading to greater levels of acquisition utility (Chandlen et al., 2000) provided by price promotions. Hence, brand managers need to consider price promotions as important, long term and positive brand building activity rather treating them as brand harming exercise in the short term (Davis et al., 1992).

Moreover, our findings suggest that consumers’ perceptions of the amount of money spent on advertising brands is not good enough to persuade them to buy those brands in greater frequency and in preference to other brands. It might be that factors such as quality and nature of the contents of advertising (e.g., use of persuasive techniques), styles of presentation and the channels used might have explained better the ability and power of the advertising to persuade our respondents to buy products repeatedly. There is plenty of anecdotal evidence suggesting that consumers do not buy every brand that comes in the market with huge advertising expenditure and, therefore, confirm our notion that consumers are not always influenced by their perceptions of the amount of money spent on advertising. Huge amounts of advertising expenditure might actually suggest desperation on the part of a marketer (Kirmani and Wright, 1989) rather than signalling a quality sign to consumers. This is in line Yoo and Donthu, (2002) who reported that perceived advertising effort was not related to brand loyalty levels in the Korean market. Finally, brand managers need to exercise caution in deploying price promotions to encourage brand loyalty levels within the total mobile phone market as price promotions are likely to be more effective for individuals with lower levels of self image congruency than for those with higher levels. A more effective strategy could be to emphasise symbolic values and brand images in promotional messages (Sirgy et al., 1997) to encourage loyalty within the mobile phones market.

References
Imagine that you try a new fruit while you are on vacation in a foreign country and it tastes like a slice of heaven. You eagerly buy another and it is extremely disappointing. You later find out that there are two varieties of this fruit and one of the varieties is consistently excellent, but the other is usually bad. How might you learn to consistently find the good variety?

People regularly face categorization decisions like this. There are two common strategies for learning categories: 1) choose items that are similar to other items in the target category, or 2) learn to identify the key features that distinguish between items in the different categories. The first strategy, holistic categorization, relies on global similarities between category members. The second strategy, analytic categorization, relies on rules that are based on discriminating attributes. If a rule exists, analytic categorization is efficient because it focuses attention on the most relevant information. Unfortunately, learning rules requires more cognitive resources than holistic categorization (e.g., Smith et al. 1993). Moreover, cognitive constraints inhibit rule learning (e.g., Hutchison & Alba 1991; Justin et al. 2003; Smith & Kemler Nelson 1984).

In contrast to previous researchers, we demonstrate that cognitive constraints can actually facilitate rule learning when people have appropriate prior expectations about the rules; because expectations can help to guide the process of hypothesis testing. Previous studies showed that people generate hypotheses about all of the features and then eliminate hypotheses as they are disconfirmed (Bruner et al. 1956; Meyer 1987). However, we propose that prior expectations facilitate rule learning by directing attention to fewer, more relevant attributes. For example, in trying to identify the discriminating features for good and bad varieties of the foreign fruit, you might first compare firmness or size because these features are most associated with taste in your experience with similar fruits. Cognitive constraints increase the likelihood of relying on prior expectations, thus further increasing the efficiency of hypothesis testing.

A pilot study examined the effect of prior expectations on rule learning without cognitive constraints. The participants’ task was to learn about another person’s tastes in wine. They saw a series of wines and were told whether each wine was liked or disliked by the other person. Then they were asked to choose which one of the two new wines would be liked. We pretested prior expectations about possible rules for discriminating between the two kinds of wines and, in two experimental conditions, we generated descriptions of wines based on a rule that was either consistent or inconsistent with expectations. We predicted that the rule is easier to learn when it is consistent, versus inconsistent, with prior expectations. The study was designed such that the choice between the two new wines implied the categorization strategy that was used. We also asked post-decision questions about the strategies.

According to the null hypothesis, participants should be able to identify the rule equally well across conditions, because they test hypotheses for all of the attributes and eliminate those that are disconfirmed by new information (Bruner et al. 1956). However, the results supported our prediction: when the rule was consistent with prior expectations, significantly more participants identified the rule, compared to the condition where the rule was not consistent ($X^2 (1) = 12.12, p<0.05$).

The main experiment employed a 2 (Cognitive constraints: yes vs. no) X 2 (Rule: rule vs. pseudo-rule) between-subjects design. Cognitive constraints have been shown to reduce the amount of information that is processed (e.g., Pontari & Schlenker 2000; Nowlis & Shiv 2005). Since prior expectations help participants focus on the relevant attributes (Pilot Study), we hypothesized that cognitive constraints facilitate rule learning when the rule is consistent with prior expectations.

We also tested for the ability to learn and use pseudo-rules, which are not perfect rules but are the most valid features in terms of predicting the categories. The usage of pseudo-rules is important because most real-world categories lack precise definitions (Gigerenzer 1991). In our study, the pseudo-rule provided 80% correct predictions, compared to only 50% for each of the other attributes. We hypothesized that both perfect and pseudo-rules would be faster for cognitively constrained participants to identify when the rule was consistent, rather than inconsistent, with their prior expectations.

Participants were asked to predict two brands of electronic products based on their marketing strategies. Each product was either Brand A or Brand B and it was described by five attributes: price, quality, targeted consumers, advertising budgets, and distribution outlets. Pre-testing of prior expectations indicated that both price and quality were considered significantly more likely than the other attributes to be the rule, and we chose to use quality as the rule for our design. The findings supported our hypothesis when quality was perfectly discriminating, but not when quality was only 80% accurate as a predictor. Specifically, cognitive constraints significantly increased rule
learning when the rule was perfect ($X^2_{(1)}=3.82, p=0.049$), but constraints had no effects for pseudo-rules. Furthermore, a multinomial logit analysis showed that cognitive constraints were associated with a higher weight for quality ($p=0.012$) only when the rule was perfect. It should be noted that prior expectations were equivalent for price and quality, so that the participants in our study had to learn to use quality, and not price, as the rule. These results are therefore consistent with rapid, focused learning and cannot be attributed to mere confirmation of prior expectations.

We show that cognitive constraints can enhance rule learning when prior expectations are consistent with the correct rule. By contrast, cognitive constraints usually inhibit rule learning when there are no prior expectations (e.g., Hutchison & Alba 1991; Justin et al. 2003; Smith & Kemler Nelson 1984). We obtain similar results when prior expectations are not consistent with the rule (study not reported in this abstract).

We are conducting additional research to examine the underlying process. We propose that when prior expectations exist, cognitive constraints might generate a more focused hypothesis at the outset and/or lead to a more aggressive hypothesis updating approach.

References


Service Quality Factors: A Study on Travel Agencies Industry
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Travel agencies in Spain are currently facing a rapidly changing environment. Proving high service quality is increasingly recognized as a critical factor in the success of firms in the travel and tourism industry (Fick and Ritchie, 1991). Travel agencies need to assess their service quality in order to identify the level of service quality in the travel business and the key drivers for service quality improvements.

The perception of service quality has been extensively studied during the past three decades. However, the service literature suggests that there is no consensus on how to conceptualize or operationalize perceived service quality (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Rust and Oliver, 1994). Owing to the intangible, heterogeneous and inseparable nature of services, service quality can be defined as “the customer’s assessment of the overall excellence or superiority of the service” (Zeithaml, 1988, p.3). Many models have been developed to measure customer perceptions of service quality: “The Nordic Model” (Grönroos, 1984), “SERVQUAL model” (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1988), “Evaluated Performance Model” (Teas, 1993), “SERVPERF” (Cronin and Taylor, 1992), “Retail Service Quality Scale” (Dabholkar, Thorpe, and Rentz, 1996), “The hierarchical and multidimensional” (Brady and Cronin, 2001).

A number of empirical studies have focused on service quality in the travel agencies industry. Most studies have measured service quality by replicating or adapting the SERVQUAL (Lam and Zhang, 1999; Ryan and Cliff, 1997; Johns, Avci, and Karatepe, 2004; Bigné et al., 1996) or SERVPERF models (Setó, 2003). Many marketing researchers admit that the use of those generic models to measure service quality across industries is infeasible (Babakus and Boller, 1992). Thus, in light of the problems associated with these models, the aim of this study is to develop a scale using a multidimensional and hierarchical model (Brady and Cronin, 2001) which takes the specific characteristics of the travel industry into account.

We develop a measurement instrument, in accordance with the procedure for scale development recommended by Churchill (1979). Thus findings from qualitative research, together with the review of the quality literature have been conducted to propose the following model: a hierarchical and multidimensional model in which quality is a higher order factor that is defined by three primary dimensions and seven subdimensions.

The first dimension is “personal interaction”. Several researchers have indicated the importance of this factor in the delivery of service and have identified it as having the most significant effect on service quality perceptions (Grönroos, 1982; Bigné et al, 1996). Both service literature and our qualitative research suggest that there are three subdimensions: conduct (Capelleras and Veciana, 2002), expertise (Brady and Cronin, 2001), and problem solving (Kim and Jin, 2002). The second proposed dimension is “physical environment”. Authors such as Ryan and Cliff (1997), Lam and Zhang (1999) or Johns et al. (2004) considered the influence of this factor on travel agencies customer service evaluations; two subdimensions are proposed to explain this dimension: equipment (Ko and Pastore, 2004) and ambient
conditions (Le Blanc, 1992). The last dimension of service quality is “outcome”. There was agreement in the literature that the outcome of the service encounter significantly affects customer perceptions of service quality (Rust and Oliver 1994; Carman 2000). The findings from Brady and Cronin (2001) and the qualitative research were used to propose the subdimensions of this latent variable: waiting time and valence.

After items generation and scale purification, the final instrument had a total of 31 items reflecting seven subdimensions of travel agencies service quality. A convenience sample of 202 individuals who used travel agencies services within the previous 12 months (Ryan and Clift, 1997) was collected. Ninety-one percent of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 45. The majority of the respondents (56 percent) were female. Fifty-six percent of the respondents had university degrees. It appeared that respondents with a “leisure” purpose for their trip (85%) dominated the sample, while “business” accounted for only 15%. About 63% of the respondent used travel agencies services once a year; 20% used such services twice or three times a year; and 17% used such services four times or more a year.

We conducted the test of the hierarchical third-order structure following the procedure for model testing proposed by Hayduk (1996) and Hayduk and Glaser (2000), using the “gold standard indicator” methodology. We thought that the dimension “outcome” is the best definition of the service quality concept (Ko and Pastore, 2004). The “valence” subdimension is the chosen as most closely defining the “outcome” dimension. It captures attributes that control whether customers believe that service outcome is good or bad, as an overall evaluation also. Regarding “personal interaction” dimension, we believed that “conduct” is its best manifestation. Attitude and behaviours have been considered to be vital elements in service encounters (Bitner, 1990). Finally, we selected the “equipment” subdimension as the key indicator of the “physical environmental” concept.

We began with the test of the model M1,1 using LISREL 8.50 (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 2001) maximum likelihood method. We assigned 15% error variance to all the gold standard indicators and four of the diagonal elements of the Psi matrix were fixed to represent 15% of error variance of their respective gamma and beta paths. However, the model did not fit properly: $\chi^2 = 30.35$ (15); $p=0.011$.

The next stage was the test of a less restricted model (M2,1) freeing all diagonal elements of the Psi matrix. This model yielded an excellent fit: $SB^{2} = 6.54$ (11); $p=0.840$. Nevertheless, this conceptualization lacks of the dictated meaning of the higher order latents. Hence, a more robust test of the theoretical model is needed, adding a second indicator per subdimension. The selection of the second best indicator was achieved according to the subjective view of the second best indicator and the patterns of correlations showed in the pretest analysis. We included these items in the model M2,2 and the test yielded a poor fit: $SB^{2} = 121.02$ (74); $p<0.001$.

These results indicate that our view about the meaning of the latents is questionable, or at least, it is not as close to the gold standard observable indicator as we thought at first. However, if a less restricted model without error variance constraints fits, the model is not causally misspacificed, and we can not reject the conceptualization unless some unexpected estimates appear. We tested M3,2 with and excellent result: $SB^{2} = 70.91$ (67); $p=0.350$, and highly significant gamma, beta and lambda paths.

Also, we considered two alternative models: (1) A model with a general factor accounting for all items covariances, and (2) A model with a general factor accounting for all subdimensions covariances. In both cases, the analyses of the models showed that were inconsistent with the data.

The results of the third order confirmatory factor analysis have shown that we can count on the validity of a battery of 14 items that support partially the original purpose. The study of the residuals pattern of failing models, as M3,2, is somewhat embarrassing because there are several problematic residuals. This fact makes more difficult to detect misspecification (Hayduk, 1996). However, the test of the less constrained model M3,2 can reveal valuable information with regard to the pattern of causal relationships assuming we sacrifice the precise meaning of latents. This is summarized in the following lines: (A) “Outcome” is the key manifestation of service quality. This factor is unexpectedly close to the meaning of the higher order construct as it perfectly reflects the consumer evaluations of service quality. (B) Service quality evaluations are quite well defined by the judgements regarding how the service is delivered, and this approach agrees with the relevance of “personal interaction” in the service marketing literature (Grönroos, 1990). (C) Results clearly indicate that the environmental in which the service delivery occurs is not as good definition of service quality as the other two dimensions. This is an expected finding, because of the high degree of intangibility of this kind of service.

Our study shows that a lesser degree of abstraction in the definition of certain attributes of service quality would be desirable. Therefore our model serves as a starting point for improving the measurement of the service quality in this sector. Thus, it is a valuable contribution for the systematic utilization of service quality questionnaires by travel agencies in order to obtain a dynamic picture of evaluations and consumer future intentions over time (Mittal, Katrichis, and Kumar, 2001; Johnson, Herrmann, and Huber, 2006).

References
How Do You React When You Know That You Miss the Price Promotion after Purchasing: The Impacts of Purchase Timing and Attribution on Perceived Price Unfairness, Negative Emotions and Behavioral Reactions

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Although price promotions can attract new customers as well as increase the amount of products bought by old customers, Blatteberg, Briesch & Fox (1995) have indicated that there still are negative effects on price promotions. One of them is the sales dip after the price promotions, which has been explained from two perspectives: purchase accelerations and stockpiling (Blatteberg, Eppn & Kieberman 1981; Neslin, Henderson & Quelch 1985). Recently, Zeelenberg & van Putten (2005) offered another explanation: switching behavior. They indicated that people who miss the price promotions may switch their purchasing to other brand.

Although Zeelenberg & Van Putten (2005) have examined how consumers will react when they missed price promotion, they just focused on consumers who realize the missing of price promotion before they purchase the product. But, consumers may realize such missing after they have purchased the product. Although such consumers have already purchased the product, the realization of missing price promotion may have impact on their post-purchase behaviors. Furthermore, perceived price unfairness has been identified as one psychological factor that exerts an important influence on consumer’s reaction to prices (Kaheneman, Kenetsh & Thaler 1986; Campbell 1999). Therefore, this study examines how the missing of the price promotion will affect consumers’ perceived price unfairness when they realize such missing after they have purchased the product.
Though this study investigates the negative impact of missing price promotions realized after the purchase, the price promotion missed by the consumers could be occurred either before or after the purchasing. Thus, purchase timing (before or after the price promotion) is one major factor to be discussed in this study. A consumer may make a purchase too early and cannot gain the benefit from a price promotion offered later or he may make a purchase too late and misses a price promotion offered before (Cooke, Meyvis and Schwartz 2001). Therefore, we categorize purchasing timing into two types: (1) pre-promotion purchasing which refers purchasing before the price promotion and (2) post-promotion purchasing which refers purchasing after price promotion. Thus, whether the level of perceived price unfairness affected by the missing price promotion will vary on these two types of purchasing timing is the major question this study wants to address.

Attribution is another important factor included in this study. Heidler (1958) categorized the locus of causality into two kinds: internal attribution (personal-related) and external attribution (situational-related). In this study, if consumers miss the price promotion due to self mistake, they will attribute the causality to themselves, which refers to internal attribution. On the contrary, if the responsibility of missing price promotion is firm-related, then consumers will attribute the causality to the firms, which refers to external attribution. Different attribution will influence how consumers react when they miss price promotion. Therefore, we will examine how attribution influences the price unfairness perception in this study.

Finally, this study also attempts to investigate the impact of perceived price unfairness on negative emotion (anger, disappointed, and regret) and behavioral reactions (such as: complaining, negative WOM, switching, inertia). It has been shown that perceived price unfairness will make consumers leave the exchange relationship, spread negative WOM (Campbell 1999). However, the relationship between perceived price unfairness and negative emotions are less discussed and verified empirically (Xia et al. 2004). Therefore, we want to investigate how negative emotions will be generated and how it will influence behavioral reactions toward the firms.

After reviewing the related literatures, we develop the research framework and hypotheses. To collect the empirical data, this study conduct an experiment with 2 (purchase timing: pre-promotion vs. post-promotion) *2 (attribution: external vs. internal) between-subjects design. There are 202 college students participated in this experiment. By analyzing the data through analysis of variance (ANOVA) and structure equation model (SEM), the major findings of this study are as following:

1. Although purchase timing does not affect perceived price unfairness, it has significant impact on negative emotion. That is, consumers who purchase the product before the price promotion generate stronger regret than those who purchase after the price promotion.
2. Attribution has a significant impact on perceived price unfairness. Consumers who miss price promotion due to external attribution will generate higher perceived price unfairness.
3. When consumers perceive the higher price unfairness, they will have the stronger negative emotion in terms of anger and disappointed.
4. Consumers with stronger anger and disappointed are more likely to take negative reactions such as: switching to other stores, spreading negative WOM, and complaining.
5. Consumers with stronger regret are more likely to take no reaction.

References

Regulatory Focus as a Moderator of Persuasion in Message Framing: A Test of Three Accounts
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A review of previous literature shows that there are at least three ways in which regulatory focus may be related to message framing. Specifically, three opposing accounts propose that persuasion is enhanced when there is a fit between a person’s regulatory focus (a) and the overall valence of the message (i.e., positive vs. negative valence), (b) and the outcome focus of the message (i.e., gain vs. loss anchor), (c) and the type of benefit or harm emphasized (i.e., achievement vs. security), respectively, In order to resolve these inconsistencies, we
used a 2 (overall valence) by 2 (outcome focus) by 2 (type of benefit emphasized) factorial design. Results generally supported the hypothesis that persuasion is increased when chronic regulatory focus fits the overall valence of the message.

The ‘Real’ Value of Fakes: Network-based Subcultures of Brand Appropriations and the Implications for Consumer-Brand Relationships
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My research examines counterfeit markets, where Marketers cannot control consumer-brand relationships. I conducted a longitudinal ethnography in two markets: 1) the socially-embedded “purse party”, and 2) the atomistic “street vendor”. Consumers in an embedded market exhibited a high propensity to later purchase the authentic brand (controlling for prior purchase). I argue that networks and pseudo-access to the brand increase aspiration for the brand. These consumers had never purchased the brand (“too smart to be label-conscious”), and they made negative attributions to those who do (“frivolous”). However, these consumers renegotiate their in-group identity as their aspiration for the brand increases. This research contributes to “pseudo-endowment” research that shows actual possession is not a prerequisite for endowment effects.

Sources

Tell Her She’s Wrong! Triangulation as a Spousal Influence Strategy
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Purchase decisions are often jointly made by couples who share the use of products and consult with each other concerning various aspects of the purchase. The purpose of this study was to evaluate which influence strategies are used during this process, and to introduce the Triangulation strategy, a hitherto unexplored spousal influence strategy in consumer behavior literature.

Theoretical Background
The family is an emotional system, and family members’ emotional functioning is based on reciprocity (Bowen, 1978, Kerr & Bowen, 1988). In order to reach an accurate understanding of human behavior, it is important to look beyond the individual and examine the relationship system within one participates. According to Kerr & Bowen, a dyad, a “two-person” system, is inherently unstable since it is more vulnerable to internal and external stress. Thus, the triangle is the smallest stable relationship unit (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 134). When one partner experiences anxiety or tension on a level they are unable to contain, they will enlist a third individual in order to diffuse this tension. The enlisting of a third person is called triangulation. The triangled person can be a friend, a relative or one or more of the couple’s children.

Six influence strategies described by Raven et al. (1975): Expert influence is reflected in the spouse’s enumeration of specific information concerning the various alternatives. Legitimate influence deals with one spouse’s attempts to draw upon the other’s feelings of shared values concerning their role expectations. Reward influence is based on the reward that the influencer can give the one being influenced. Identification is the feeling of oneness of one person with another. Coercion is the punishment or unpleasant results and behavior that one spouse can employ. Information Management includes the content of the persuasive attempts and careful and successful explanations or arguments, sometimes by attributing the influence attempt to external pressures beyond the influencer’s control. The use of an Emotional strategy involves displaying some emotion-based reaction (Spiro, 1983). These strategies have already been discussed in consumer behavior literature. Religious strategy involves the use of religious arguments relevant to the product and/or to the circumstances of its consumption. This strategy is a subject of a qualitative study that is currently being conducted by the author. The purpose of this paper is to introduce the Triangulation strategy.

Methodology
192 couples were asked to evaluate their own and their mates’ influence strategies in four purchase decisions. The decisions were a vacation, living room furniture, a TV set and a new residence place. The survey questionnaire was designed to measure the use of the above mentioned nine influence strategies. In order to examine the triangulation strategy, the survey questionnaire included the following five items: ‘ask his/her friend to influence him/her,’ ‘ask my friend to influence him/her’, ‘ask our children to influence him/her’, ‘ask his/her relative to influence him/her’ and ‘ask my relative to influence him/her’. Subjects were asked to state their use of each item on a 5 point Likert scale, in which 1 means ‘never’ and 5 means ‘always’. The internal consistency of this strategy was measured by Cronbach’s alpha and the alpha values were 0.88-0.92 for women and 0.94-0.95 for men. As to the item ‘ask our child/ren’, only the answers of couples who have children over the age of 6 were considered.
Results

In general, a look at the averages of each of the nine strategies for both men and women reveals that the most frequently used strategies are ‘identification’ and ‘legitimate’; less frequent are ‘expert’ and ‘reward’; followed by ‘emotional’, ‘coercion’ and ‘triangulation’ strategies, which are used with lower intensity, and the least frequently used strategies are ‘information management’ and ‘religious’.

Specific analyses of the triangulation strategy include firstly, comparisons of the tendency to use this strategy between the four products. These comparisons were made with regard to gender, education, income, marital satisfaction and duration of marriage. Secondly, comparisons were made between the four products. Thirdly, comparisons were made between each of the five triangulated persons.

(1) Overall strategy, average of four products

Men reported a significantly greater use of the triangulation strategy than did women (means for men 1.37-1.54, means for women 1.23-1.42).

The longer the marriage relationship is, the lower the use of the triangulation strategy among men (-0.151*). The higher the educational level of the woman, the greater the use of this strategy (r=0.189). No significant correlations were found between the use of this strategy and the subject’s income level or his marital satisfaction.

(2) Differences between products

Triangulation is most frequently used during a vacation and a new residence place decisions. As to the vacation, living room furniture and TV set, men reported a significantly greater use of triangulation strategy than did women. No significant difference between men and women was found regarding the decision to move to a new residence. The negative correlation between the tendency to use this strategy and the duration of marriage was lowest with regard to vacation (Table 1).

(3) Differences between triangulated persons

Regarding all of the items except for ‘ask our child/ren’, men reported a significantly greater tendency to ask a third person to influence. Contrarily, women reported a significantly greater tendency to ask the child/ren to influence their husbands. Among men, the most frequently triangulated party in a vacation and a TV set decision were children, less frequently were relatives, followed by friends. No differences were found between third persons in the other two decisions. Women reported a significantly greater tendency to ask the child/ren than all other third persons, in all of the four products.

Summary and Conclusion

These findings contribute to a better understanding of couple purchase decision process. Findings shed light on the triangulation strategy, a hitherto unexplored aspect in consumer behavior literature. Consumer researchers should take into account the influence of close friends and relatives that might play a role in couple purchase decision processes. Marketing practitioners can gain benefits from these conclusions and direct their efforts toward securing the most positive responses.

References


Afro-Brazilians: Representations of and Feelings about Their Portrayals on Television

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The purpose of this study is to investigate how African-Brazilians perceive their images on television, which feelings are triggered by the interpretations of these portrayals and which strategies they use to deal with these representations. Our findings indicate that interviewees believe that there are very few portrayals of African-Brazilians on television and that they are stigmatized. In addition, we
have found that negative feelings are triggered by their interpretations of such portrayals on television and that they deconstruct, reject and do not identify with them.

The effects of stigmatized representations in the media should be carefully analyzed by those with an interest in the societal impacts of marketing practices. Previous research of African-Brazilians in mass media has found that not only are their portrayals limited and stigmatized (Stan 1997; Araujo 2000) but they could also cause negative effects on the group (Gerbner et al 1980). Indeed, previous studies have shown that repeated exposure to stigmatization may result in the acceptance of the stigma. (Elias and Scotson, 1994; Gerbner et al,1980). Furthermore, research in this area is essential, since the belief that Brazil is a racial democracy is still widespread in society (Bernardino, 2002).

To the extent that viewers learn from what they watch in the media (Bandura 2002), the reinforcement of stigmatization in mass communication may result in negative consequences for minorities (Taylor, Landreth and Bang 2005). In Goffman’s (1988) view, a stigma is a socially discrediting attribute which serves to ostracize the recipient. After Goffman, many researchers have investigated stigmatization (Heatherton, et al 2000; Miller and Major 2000).

In order to explain the phenomenon under analysis we make use of the approach devised by Elias and Scotson (1994) in “The Established and the Outsiders” which also applies Goffman’s concept of stigma. According to the authors, the stigmatization process takes place when there is an imbalance of power between groups, a power which stems from the existing cohesion within a group which is lacking in the other. In this manner, one group is able to stigmatize the other provided that the former detains cohesion. The established group is able to benefit from a position in society which is denied to the other group. In this position, the established label the outsiders as having lower human values and debilitate their self-esteem. In addition, according to Elias and Scotson (1994), racial relations are a specific type of established-outsiders relationship. In this case, the differences in the physical characteristics serve as a sign of reinforcement that makes the stigmatized group be easily recognized. However, the established-outsiders relationship exists even when there are not any biological differences between the two groups. This is the case, for example, of the Burakumin minority in Japan, who has the same ethnic origin as the Japanese. Moreover, other important elements in Elias and Scotson (1994) approach are the fact that the repetition of the stigma results in its incorporation as a reality by the outsiders and that the stigmatization may produce social withdrawal and ghettoization or, when the contact with the majority is necessary, incorporation of deviant social roles.

Grounded-theory research was applied and qualitative data was obtained from 37 African-Brazilians heavy television viewers, who watched it on an average of five days per week (O’Guinn and Shrum 1997). The in-depth semi-structured interviews were balanced across gender, social class and age. Furthermore, the portrayals that they were asked to comment on came from their recollection of commercials, films, soap operas or any other television programs. They commented on the African-descendents’ presence or absence in the media, their roles, the symbolic meanings of the characters, their own feelings about these representations and their own strategies to deal with the images they had seen. Results were structured into three analytical dimensions: interpretations of the portrayals; feelings triggered by the interviewees’ interpretations; strategies to deal with the representations.

Many representations mentioned by the interviewees reveal that they believe that society stigmatizes them. First of all, they claim that there are very few portrayals of Afro-Brazilians on television and when there are any at all the actors always play a secondary role. Furthermore, they suggest that these few portrayals serve as an instrument to disguise the racism that still exists in society. In their view, their images are extremely stereotyped in many ways. For example, they believe that they are only portrayed in sports or in the entertainment industry, as soccer players, samba dancers or hip-hop singers. Moreover, not only the constant subaltern positions that are pictured, but also their association with poverty, filth, slums, ugliness, crime, misfortune and illiteracy are interpreted as stigmatization cues. Indeed, in situations where there is a strong imbalance of power and intense oppression, the outsiders are often considered dirty and or dehumanized (Elias and Scotson 1994).

Another element that they perceive in the television images is that African-Brazilians are never pictured as consumers of expensive products. Indeed, they are seldom if ever portrayed as consumers, but when they are it is always of cheap products. The interviewees reported that these images make them feel excluded by the society, injured, hurt, uncomfortable, rancorous, angry and exasperated. They deconstructed their recollections of images and claimed not to identify with them. Indeed, they argued that these portrayals are very different from the reality that they know. On the other hand, they reported that these images “inspire” them to keep proving that African-descendants are not what these images show or want them to become. However, some of our interviewees denied that these images could strike them because they were “different”. The differences were based on the color of their skin, which was not very dark, or on their higher level of education, or on their income. Thus, the narratives suggest that our participants accept the stigmas imposed by the society and manifest that by wanting to be white or by needing to prove that they are not what society says they are. Nevertheless, this is not the case of all the interviewees. Some claim to be proud of their ethnic background and do not incorporate the stigmas.

References
Does Negative American Sentiment Affect Consumption Choices?
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International animosity has been a concern for the U.S. since its conception. Animosity is defined as anger due to “previous or ongoing political, military, economic, or diplomatic events” (Klein, Ettenson and Morris 1998, p. 90) and has been shown to affect consumer preferences and choices (Klein 2002). The past few decades have seen evidence of increased animosity toward the U.S. (Economist 2005; Sardar and Davies 2003). Yet, surprisingly, academic research linking animosity toward the U.S. to consumer behavior is lacking. This research examines the relationship between negative American sentiment and U.S. movie consumption in France, a country where anti-Americanism is more pronounced now than ever before (Lacrone 2005).

France and the U.S. have had a long history of friendliness and animosity (Roger 2005) and this turbulent relationship is especially palpable in the movie industry. France has presented the staunchest opposition to the mass presence of American movies due to a fear that their omnipresence would result in the demise of French culture (Ulf-Moller 2001). The cultural battle between imported American and local productions is especially salient there given the nearly century old row over movie trade. Like most countries, France’s movie market is dominated by U.S. imports but, unlike most national markets, it maintains a healthy number of local productions. Furthermore, the high degree of political and economic animosity between the two countries following the 2003 political and diplomatic crisis over the war in Iraq makes this selection particularly current and insightful (Lacrone 2005). In an industry dominated by U.S. productions, what, if any, are the effects of anti-American feelings on consumption of American movies?

Hypotheses

Based on previous animosity research linking animosity to consumption of products from the target country (Klein et al. 1998), high animosity toward the U.S. should be related to lower U.S. movie consumption (H1) but not related to consumption of domestic films (H2). Previous animosity research has focused on the interrelationships between the animosity construct and other constructs relevant to foreign product consumption. In particular, animosity is anchored in a nomological network that often includes ethnocentrism. Animosity toward the U.S. is expected to be positively related to consumers’ ethnocentrism (H3) and negatively to cultural openness (H4) (Suh and Kwon 2002). In predicting the proportion of American movies consumed, animosity was thus hypothesized to be the most important driver of consumer choices (H5).

Methodology and Sample

Survey data (N=306) were collected from two French undergraduate institutions. Both schools forwarded email invitations on behalf of the researchers for students to partake in an internet-based survey regarding their movie consumption. The survey began with the main dependent variable, a movie consumption measure. This was addressed by having respondents list the last five movies they had watched at a movie theater over the past month. All reported movies were subsequently coded by country-of-origin to allow for accurate ratios of domestic and U.S. movie consumption to be computed. The independent variables were collected next using a set of 5-point Likert scale items; respondents indicated their level of agreement with a series of statements. The statement items from key constructs were intermixed: animosity towards the U.S. (Klein et al. 1998), ethnocentrism (Shimp and Sharma 1987), and global openness (Suh and Kwon 2002). Finally, demographic information and a series of control measures were collected.

Findings

Consumption ratios were computed based on the self-reported movies consumed. Respondents consumed an average of 2.14 at the theater in the past month, comparable to the national average of 2.92 (EAO 2004). On average, 55% of these movies were American and 34% were French, proportions that nearly mirror the overall market share distribution of 52.9% and 35% respectively (EAO 2004).

Animosity toward the U.S. ranged from 1 to 5 with a mean of 2.38. In general, ethnocentrism levels were low (mean=1.67) but they were 34% were French, proportions that nearly mirror the overall market share distribution of 52.9% and 35% respectively (EAO 2004). On average, 55% of these movies were American and domestic and U.S. movie consumption to be computed. The independent variables were collected next using a set of 5-point Likert scale items; respondents indicated their level of agreement with a series of statements. The statement items from key constructs were intermixed: animosity towards the U.S. (Klein et al. 1998), ethnocentrism (Shimp and Sharma 1987), and global openness (Suh and Kwon 2002). Finally, demographic information and a series of control measures were collected.

To test H5, a multiple regression was conducted of the ratio of U.S. to total movies on animosity, ethnocentrism, global openness and the total number of movies watched. The analyses revealed a significant and negative beta coefficient for animosity (β=-.152, p<.05)
but no effect of ethnocentrism or global openness ($p>.05$). This indicates that the more anti-U.S. animosity consumers experienced, the fewer American movies they had watched at the theater. This also demonstrates that animosity operates independently of other phenomena and specifically affects US movie consumption, as predicted by H5.

**Discussion**

This research provides empirical evidence for the proposition that anti-American sentiments in France are negatively related to U.S. movie consumption: at the high end of the anti-Americanism spectrum, French respondents watch fewer American movies. One of the advantages of this research is its focus on actual consumption data as opposed to stated preferences. This provides a more valid test of the relationship between animosity and consumption. Further, this is one of few studies that have investigated animosity effects in the context of experiential products, most research to date having focused on durable goods. The findings suggest that there may be animosity thresholds. The data indicate that the penchant to consume American cultural products is not unabated and that there may be a psychological breaking point for the consumer. The ongoing concern of the impact of imported, especially American, movies on local cultures is and will continue to be an important issue in cultural, media, and business studies in Europe.

**References**


Perceived Risk in a Strategic Household Purchase: Consumer Home Buying Behavior

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In the past few years, a criticism has been directed towards the consumer behavior research due to its neglect of consumer well-being and the lack of focus on difficulties consumers face when making buying decisions for a strategic product. Conchar et al. (2004) concluded that potential losses are the foremost concern in consumer decisions. Indeed, existing literature lacks empirical studies of consumer decision making for “strategic decisions” (Bazerman, 2001; Gronhaug, Kleppe, and Haukedal 1987). According to Wells (1993), investigating purchasing decisions that can change consumers’ lives, such as a house purchase, can make an essential contribution to consumer behavior knowledge. Strategic decisions incorporate a range of fields, including health decisions (Henry 2001), and financial investments (Henry 2005). Compared to buying convenience products consumers perceive these kinds of large ticket purchases as riskier, sometimes even “traumatic” (Mitchell, 1999; Bauer, 1960). Outcomes of such purchases are unknown in advance and some of them are likely to be unpleasant. The core construct in the decision making process is the “perceived risk” consumers experience (Cho and Lee, 2006; Dowling and Staelin, 1994; Ogletorpe and Monroe, 1994; Srinivasan and Ratchford, 1991). Hence, its role in strategic purchases requires attention from researchers.

In view of the dearth of literature exploring consumer decision making when purchasing high-involvement and emotionally charged products, the purpose of this research was twofold: a) to develop a conceptual model of a perceived risk for a prefabricated house purchase; b) to gain knowledge of factors impacting the decision-making process from the empirical standpoint. For several reasons the product selected in this study was a prefabricated house: it is a product you actually buy (almost in one piece); house is the most important durable good in the household and it requires high involvement as well as complex decision making. The strongest parallel can be made with a car purchase, and many studies of consumer decision making indicate there are similarities in the buying processes of different durable goods (Punj, 1987). Hence, the empirical literature in this area and the real estate literature provided a basis for this study.
After a thorough review of the existing empirical work, a conceptual model of perceived risk in case of a house purchase was developed. This model consists of three main groups of variables, the perceived risk, its antecedents and its consequences. It suggests that an individual’s prior experience (Srinivasan and Ratchford, 1991; Chaudhuri, 2001), subjective knowledge (Dowling and Staelin, 1994; Havlena, DeSarbo, 1991), situational involvement (Richins, Bloch and McQuarrie, 1992; Dholakia, 2001; Grewal, Mehta, Kardes, 2004), perceived financial sacrifice (Schmidt and Spreng, 1996; Dowling and Staelin, 1994; Agarwal and Teas, 2001) and intangibility (Laroche, Bergeron and Goutaland, 2001) of the product prior to its delivery would influence perceived risk. Furthermore, the perceived risk would affect an individual’s perceived benefits (Srinivasan and Ratchford, 1991; Dowling and Staelin, 1994), and information search (Dowling and Staelin, 1994; Beatty and Smith, 1987; Moore and Lehman, 1980).

Prior experience is defined as consumer’s experience with a prefabricated house prior to the purchase, e.g., helping friends with their house purchase. Subjective knowledge is consumer’s perception of house-related information held in his/her memory. Situational involvement is defined as an internal state, which describes consumer’s interest for a specific purchase situation. Perceived financial sacrifice refers to a consumer’s perception of sacrifice in case of a house purchase, including also the costs of the product. Perceived intangibility is presented as consumer’s unclear perception of a product, which means the consumer doesn’t have a mentally clear image of a house—especially when lacking experience. We have defined perceived risk as consumer’s pre-purchase risk perception in case of a house purchase. Information search is defined as the level of attention, perception and effort, aimed at getting external information regarding house buying. Perceived benefits are benefits of using a specific risk reduction strategy, such as searching information.

In empirical testing of the proposed conceptual model, a number of factors prompted us to utilize a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, i.e., in-depth personal interviews with consumers and a field survey. In Study 1, qualitative methodology provided a deeper understanding of consumer behavior and the complicated nature of the buying process, and offered useful directions for the Study 2 utilizing quantitative research. Six semi-structured in-depth interviews were carried out in participants’ households. Topics of discussion followed the established interviewing protocol. The analysis in Study 2 was conducted in two steps. We first performed a confirmatory factor analysis with LISREL to check validity and reliability of the measurement items. Next, we employed a full-information structural equation modeling with all the measurement items finalized.

For a better insight, we have also looked into average values of the individual constructs (ranging from one to seven): involvement, sacrifice, information search and benefits were above average, while experience, knowledge, intangibility, risk were below average.

Focusing on the core model, the following structural paths were significant: experience decreases risk (-0.20); involvement increases benefits (0.62); benefits increase search (0.71); involvement increases search (0.25); experience decreases risk (-0.20); involvement increases risk (0.36) and sacrifice decreases risk (-0.17). Intangibility does not seem to influence risk significantly, neither does risk significantly influence information search. Apart from testing these paths, we also identified several other empirically and theoretically well-supported paths: knowledge increases information structural equation modeling with all the measurement items finalized.

One of the major contributions of this study was an extensive review of the literature dealing with consumer decision making processes and behavior in relation to strategic purchases, as well as perceived risk. It has been revealed that perceived risk as a multidimensional construct plays a less important role in the process of purchasing a prefabricated house; higher values have been assigned mostly to financial and delivery aspects of risk. According to our findings, important antecedents are prior experience, subjective knowledge and situational involvement, while both consequences, perceived benefits and information search are meaningful.

References
How Regulatory Focus Influences the Use of Reference Prices in Price Evaluations
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This research examines the effect of a consumer’s self-regulatory focus on the use of reference prices. In particular, we investigate how a consumer’s activated promotion and prevention self-regulatory goals affect the reliance on external price information when evaluating the current price of a target product. We suggest that when the activated self-regulatory focus goals match with the perceived “loss” and “gain” states generated by the comparison of one’s internal reference price with the current price, the consumer is more motivated to seek additional information, resulting in a greater reliance on external reference prices.

Prior research suggests two types of references prices: internal reference prices and external reference prices. Internal reference prices refer to the prices stored in a consumer’s memory. External reference prices refer to the prices of other brands in the purchase context. Also, previous research has demonstrated that the internal reference price is a part of consumers’ information set that influences their price evaluations instantaneously (Kalyanaram and Winer 1995; Mazumdar and Papatla 2000). For example, according to the mental accounting literature, the transaction utility is determined by comparing the current price with an internal standard of fairness (Thaler 1985). Thus, we expect that consumers generate instant comparison between the current price and their internal reference prices, and perceive the situation as a potential “loss” when the current price is higher, and a potential “gain” when the current price is lower, relative to their internal reference prices. Furthermore, we expect that the former situation (“loss”) will activate a goal to prevent negative outcomes (i.e., avoiding paying more than fair) whereas the latter situation (“gain”) calls for a goal to acquire positive outcomes (i.e., saving by paying less). However, the degree to which individuals engage in any action to achieve the activated goal (e.g., searching and confirming with additional information) depends on the compatibility of such task-activated goal and their predominant self-regulatory focus.

According to self-regulatory focus theory (e.g., Higgins 1997), two distinct self-regulatory foci are associated with different goals (e.g., Carver and White 1994, Gray 1982, Higgins 1997). Promotion focus is associated with achievement, advancement, and bringing oneself in line with the “ideal self”. Hence, activation of promotion focus goals evokes heightened sensitivity to positive feedbacks and acquiring positive outcomes. On the other hand, prevention focus is associated with security, obligations, and aligning oneself with the “ought self”. Thus, activation of prevention focus goals results in heightened sensitivity to negative feedbacks and avoiding negative outcomes. Previous research has also demonstrated that when people’s state of regulatory focus is consistent with the goal of a task, they will feel more involved and be more likely to engage in elaborative thinking (Lee and Aaker 2004).

Thus, we expect that when a prevention goal is activated by the potential “loss” situation in a task, consumers with predominant prevention (vs. promotion) self-regulatory focus are more motivated to take actions to prevent the potential loss. Similarly, when a promotion goal is activated by the potential “gain”, consumers with predominant promotion (vs. prevention) self-regulatory focus are more motivated to take actions to maximize the potential gain. In the context of reference prices, we believe that a motivated consumer would be more likely to search and use external reference prices as additional information to further adjust the initial price evaluations made after comparing the current price with the internal reference price. Therefore, when the internal reference price is lower than the actual price (i.e., potential “loss”), a prevention goal becomes salient and consumers with predominant prevention regulatory focus should be more motivated to further examine external price information to make careful judgments. In contrast, when their internal reference prices were higher than the actual price (i.e., potential “gain”), a promotion goal is salient and consumers with a predominant promotion regulatory focus should be more motivated to process external reference prices and adjust their price evaluations accordingly.

To test this hypothesis, a lab experiment was conducted. Based on previous research finding that independent versus interdependent self-construal is closely associated with promotion versus prevention regulatory focus, respectively, we prime self-construal to activate...
corresponding self-regulatory focus goals. 127 participants were randomly assigned to one of 2 priming (independent vs. interdependent self-construal) x 2 external reference price (low vs. high) between-subject conditions. Participants first completed a language task that conveyed the priming manipulation. They then responded to an ostensibly unrelated study that asked them to examine a flat panel TV based on a picture and some attribute descriptions. Before any price information, participants were asked to indicate a fair price for the target TV using their knowledge and previous experiences. They were later divided into two groups using a median-split of the self-generated prices. On the next page, participants were provided with the current price as well as the prices of major competitors which serve as external reference prices, and were asked to evaluate the attractiveness of the current price. The results supported the hypothesis and demonstrated a significant three-way interaction ($F(1, 120)=4.17, p<.05$). Specifically, for participants primed with an independent self-construal (i.e., promotion self-regulatory focus goal), the impact of external reference price on price evaluations was stronger when the internal price was high (vs. low). For subjects primed with an interdependent self-construal (i.e., prevention self-regulatory focus goal), the impact of external reference prices was stronger when the internal price was low (vs. high). Subjects’ thought protocols regarding to their price evaluations also provided consistent results.

We conducted a second study to test the proposed mechanism that the potential “loss” or “gain” generated by the comparison of one’s internal price with the actual price activates different self-regulatory focus-related goals. 89 participants were asked to engage in the same TV evaluation task in study 1. Participants estimated the fair price for the TV and evaluated the attractiveness of the current price. On a separate page, participants were asked to list five priorities in their lives (Pham and Avnet 2004). Data revealed that participants whose internal reference prices were higher than the current price were more likely to generate ideal-related thoughts as the first priority (suggesting a more promotion goal activated), relative to those whose internal reference prices were lower ($M_{\text{high}}=58.82\%$ vs. $M_{\text{low}}=32.73\%$, $\chi^2(6.09, p=.05)$).

Lastly, in the third study, we examined the hypothesized link between the match of the goals and the heightened motivation to engage in actions that maximize their goals. We manipulated participants’ regulatory focus by asking them to read an article about Welch grape juice (Lee and Aaker 2004). In the promotion focus condition, the article emphasized how the juice helped increase the energy level, whereas in the prevention focus condition, the article emphasized how the juice helped reduce the risk of cancer and heart disease. Subsequently, participants were asked to engage in the same TV evaluation study as in study 1. In the end, participants evaluated the current price and indicated their intentions to search for more price information in other stores and of other brands of TV. As hypothesized, data revealed a regulatory focus x internal reference price interaction ($F(1, 97)=3.14, p<.10$). Promotion-focused participants indicated higher search intention when their internal reference prices were high (vs. low) ($M_{\text{high}}=2.18$ vs. $M_{\text{low}}=1.86$), whereas prevention-focused participants indicated higher intention to search when their internal reference prices were low (vs. high) ($M_{\text{high}}=1.77$ vs. $M_{\text{low}}=2.26$).

The findings of this research enrich our knowledge on the impact of regulatory focus on consumers’ reference price usage and may have implications on designing pricing strategies.

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Examining Trade-off Difficulty and Anticipatory Mixed Emotions in the Context of Corporate Social Responsibility
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Corporate social responsibility is a highly relevant issue in today’s marketplace and affects consumers’ evaluations of a company and their subsequent purchasing behavior. However, a consumer’s information about a company can often be mixed. For example, Eastman Kodak was recognized for its cutting edge anti-discrimination policies by the Human Rights Campaign while at the same time being targeted by the Citizen’s Environmental Coalition for air emissions and on-site hazardous waste issues (Business Ethics 2004). It follows then that consumers can have conflicting feelings about making a purchase from such a company due to the positive and negative information. Our research considers how the relevance and the conflicting nature of information related to corporate social responsibility affects consumers. In particular, we make a contribution by exploring how contradictory information affects two anticipatory emotions (optimism and worry), ambivalence, and consumers’ purchase intentions.
The broader external environment that includes social concerns often forces consumers to make trade-offs when making a purchase. According to Luce, Bettman, and Payne (2001), trade-off difficulty occurs when consumers must give up attributes related to important goals and then accept the consequences of such a decision. For example, a consumer may choose to give up personal safety in order to purchase a lower priced automobile. Emotional trade-off difficulty results from the interaction of attribute identities (e.g. relevance) and attribute values (e.g. valence conflict). These trade-offs are present in most purchase decisions and are a pervasive aspect of choice (Luce et al. 2001).

The current research takes both attribute importance (i.e. relevance) and attribute conflict (i.e. information consistency) into account in examining the effect of corporate social responsibility information on emotional response and behavioral intentions. The emotional trade-off research outlined by Luce et al. (2001) focuses on the effect of trade-off difficulty on decisions and outcomes. Furthermore, their research uses a relatively undifferentiated view of emotion and they encourage research that makes a more direct tie to specific emotions. The current research builds on their model in the consideration of difficult emotional trade-offs, however we expand on their work by examining the role played by specific discrete emotions (optimism and worry) likely to exist during decision making.

Consistent with appraisal theory, our research uses a between-subjects experimental design to manipulate trade-off difficulty along the dimensions of attribute relevance and attribute conflict in order to examine how subsequent optimism and worry emotions— as well as attendant ambivalence (both objective and subjective)—impact behavioral intentions. Additionally, our research considers these effects at two different stages of consumption, prior to a purchase decision and following a purchase decision.

Respondents were randomly assigned to one of the following conditions in a 4 (attribute conflict: congruent vs. incongruent vs. contradictory A vs. contradictory B) X 2 (attribute relevance: high vs. low) X 2(timing: before purchase vs. after purchase) between-subjects design. The stimuli included a series of web pages containing summary background information, a purchase scenario, and attribute relevance and attribute conflict stimuli. In the purchase scenario, respondents were asked to imagine they were either about to purchase a product or that they had already made a purchase from Syden, a fictitious collegiate sport and apparel company. Respondents were then provided with information about Syden. The information was presented as if it were from an objective third party, The Calvert Group. This information was used to manipulate attribute relevance and attribute conflict.

The results indicate that consumers have mixed emotions, specifically optimism and worry emotions, when presented with relevant contradictory corporate social responsibility information prior to making a purchase decision. This was supported through the frequency of their co-occurrence and objective ambivalence, a measure of the similarity and intensity of their co-occurrence. Consumers also have overall mixed feelings towards the purchase as evidenced by their subjective ambivalence. These differences were not observed with less relevant information. Furthermore, consumers were less likely to purchase when exposed to relevant contradictory information prior to purchase.

When presented with information following a purchase decision, the results demonstrate that the co-occurrence of optimism and worry emotions (i.e., frequency and objective ambivalence) is not differentiable based on relevance and information consistency after a purchase decision has been made. However, consumers still have mixed feelings about the purchase, as evidenced by the elicitation of subjective ambivalence when exposed to contradictory evaluations following a purchase decision. Consumers are also less likely to keep a previously purchased product under these same conditions.

The results pertaining to the timing of corporate social responsibility information are interesting because it is not uncommon for consumers to receive new information about a company after a purchase. Relevant information presented about a company prior to a purchase decision resulted in differences in the co-occurrence of optimism and worry between contradictory and consistent information conditions, where higher levels of optimism and worry co-occurred with contradictory information. However, when consistent and contradictory information was presented following a purchase decision no differences were found in the co-occurrence of optimism and worry. One reason for this is that regardless of the type of new information, worry is likely to be present when any sort of important choice is made and optimism is present as a means of coping and hoping for the best.

This research uses appraisal theory as a framework and builds on the trade-off difficulty research of Luce et al. (2001). Our research contributes to the consumer behavior literature by considering the anticipatory emotions of optimism and worry in purchase decisions. Although it seems that these emotions would be prevalent in consumption decisions, their effect has not been considered in consumer behavior research to date. We examined not only their elicitation but also their co-occurrence. Mixed or multiple co-occurring emotions are recognized as perhaps a more accurate representation of consumption experiences than are single valence emotions (Richins 1997); however mixed emotions have only been considered recently in consumer behavior research. Our research considered multiple methods for assessing mixed emotions: the frequency of their co-occurrence and emotional ambivalence, both objective and subjective.

Furthermore, given the importance of corporate social responsibility in consumer decisions, our research makes a contribution by considering how this information affects consumer emotions, ambivalence and behavioral intentions. Future research should consider emotions in real consumption situations, as well as other emotions experienced in consumption and assessed at several points throughout the consumption experience.

References
Consumers’ Response to Sales Promotions: An Explorative Study in Junk Food Mark

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Aaker (1991) argued that marketing efforts contribute towards building brand equity which creates value for the customer, which in turn enhances value for the firm (see Yoo et al., 2000). In this context, ‘the value that sales promotions have for brands is related to the value, or benefits, that sales promotions have for consumers’ (Chandon et al., 2000, p.65). More specifically, while some have explored the fit between the benefits offered by sales promotions and the type of product under consideration (d’Astous and Landreville 2003; Chandon et al., 2000; Palazon-Vidal and Delgado-Ballester, 2005) others have focused on consumer perceptions of attractiveness of sales promotional offers (Simmonson et al., 1994; d’Astous and Landreville, 2003) in terms of the immediacy of the offer, i.e., whether it is instant or delayed (d’Astous and Landreville 2003; d’Astous and Jacob, 2002). However, a general weakness in much of the research on consumer response to sales promotions is that the focus tends to be on the benefit that the marketer is perceived to be offering to the consumer, as opposed to the value that the consumer perceives the promotion to embody.

Hence, an understanding of the benefits that sales promotions offer to consumers, and indeed to marketers, cannot be achieved entirely by a focus on sales promotions themselves or the type of product considered for purchase. Rather, the effectiveness of a sales promotion, and the attractiveness of the benefits it offers, needs to be understood in the broader context of the customer, their motivations, and their total shopping experience (see for instance, Arnold and Reynolds, 2003; Babin et al., 1994; Tauber, 1972). Similarly, many have called for investigating consumer behaviours in specific cultural contexts (de Mooij and Hofstede, 2002; McCracken, 1986) as shopping values and motives can be, in part, consequences of culture and ethnicity (Phinney, 1992; Rokeach, 1973).

In response, the current study investigates consumers’ shopping experiences including their motivations and responses to sales promotional activities within the food market with particular emphasis on food with high fat and/or sugar content commonly termed as junk food. The paper aims to contribute to the developing understanding of sales promotion by taking an interpretive (Anderson 1986; Geertz 1973; Hirschman 1989), holistic (Atkinson 1990) and theory building approach (Glasser and Strauss, 1967) to understanding the perceived benefits of sales promotion from the perspective of a specific subcultural group in the context of family food consumption. The paper argues that different attributes associated with a sales promotional activity have the potential of making consumers more responsive, less responsive or even hostile to sales promotional offers. Also, sales promotions might influence brand value in a way that could be either positive or negative depending upon the perceived net value or net-worth of sales promotion to consumers. Following Zeithmal (1988), net-worth of sales promotions can be considered as the overall assessment of their utility based on consumer perceptions of what is received and what is given.

Fourteen in-depth interviews were conducted in Cardiff, UK with mothers who were the principal grocery shoppers for the family. The respondents consisted of an equal mixture of first and second-generation of British-Pakistanis. The ethnic group was chosen due to its long history of migration to the UK (Jamal, 2003), the existence of intergenerational differences in consumption patterns within the group (Jamal, 1998) and its exposure to the mainstream as well as ethnic outlets (Jamal, 2005). All participants had at least three children but four children was the most common family size. In all, the fourteen families had a total of 52 children living at home (46 aged 18 years and under). The sample consisted mostly of full-time housewives, but also included a few who worked part-time and full time. The mothers had a range of educational backgrounds up to degree level. All had shopping experience of a wide repertoire of shops (both mainstream retail supermarkets and local ethnic stores). The interviews followed a structured and pre-tested question set; lasted between 1 and 1.5 hours, and were taped and fully transcribed. A range of sales promotional offers (both value increasing and value adding) were shown to participants to stimulate discussion and seek opinions.

An interpretation of data revealed six major themes. For instance, almost all of the participants looked for promotional offers, particularly for those where they could save money instantly. However, some respondents remained doubtful that all promotions were monetarily worthwhile and would actively engage in mental calculations to check and challenge the offers before them. Similarly, while participants were able to save money, all of them were reluctant to respond to promotional offers particularly when they knew that their children would not use the product. This is in line with prior research, which suggests that consumers do not respond to sales promotional offers unless these are attractive and relevant to them (Simmonson et al., 1994; d’Astous and Landreville 2003). Sometimes respondents felt motivated to challenge the value of an offer (e.g., the quality of free gift or trustworthiness of promotional competitions). Such reactions are potentially significant as consumers are likely to develop negative reactions towards the brand if a promotional offer is not attractive or relevant (d’Astous and Landreville 2003; Simmonson et al., 1994). Some argue that sales promotion, and in particular, price promotions are brand harming activities (Mela et al., 1997). However, there was no evidence that the presence of sales promotion was used as a quality cue by consumers. Also, almost all of the participants experienced “pester power” while shopping for children and did their best to avoid its influence. Respondents favoured the use of educational books, CD-ROMs and games as promotional tools. While most appreciated the educational benefits, others felt that it was their responsibility (and not the marketer’s) to educate their children and hence developed negative responses to sales promotions. Respondents also favoured sales promotions that allow consumers to meet personal or moral values such as being a socially responsible buyer (Mittal, 1994). They also allow consumers to seek gratification by enhancing their sense of themselves as smart shoppers and earn social recognition and affiliation with others (Bagozzi et al., 1992). Some value-adding sales promotion tools are used frequently for marketing the food products. Such promotions can be intrinsically fun to participate in as they provide the entertainment benefit to consumers (Chandon et al., 2000) with a sense of active play. Consumers can also get a sense of entertainment when their need for variety, information and exploration is fulfilled by sales promotions. Our respondents favoured such promotions and told of stories whereby they or their children collected token and appreciated the ongoing interaction and involvement with the brand. However, a majority of the respondents expressed concerns about junk food consumption and its impact on health. The paper discusses implications for marketers.
Variables Driving the Amount of Customized Product Features Chosen by a Consumer in the Car Market

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Abstract
Flexible manufacturing systems, the internet and increasingly fragmented markets have led to an increased supply of and a growing demand for customized products. Previous research on mass customization has focused mainly on the optimization of the production process and the cost structure. This study examines the influence of a number of variables on the amount of individualized product features chosen by the customer on the basis of a cost-benefit framework in the product category ‘cars’. Therefore an innovative car configuration software was used. The findings show two important target groups for customized products. First, consumers with high lasting product involvement and product expertise and, second, a function-oriented or hedonically driven consumer with a strong need for unique products.

Introduction
Flexible manufacturing systems, modern communication technologies, changing social values and mature markets give rise to an increased supply of and demand for customized goods (Pine 1993). Consumers become more financially astute, more fragmented in their involvement and product expertise and, second, a function-oriented or hedonically driven consumer with a strong need for unique products.
to meet the individual needs of their customers. The complexity resulting from this variety tends to confuse rather than satisfy customers, since they do not want to make these choices. Rather, they only want a product that best meets their needs (Pine and Gilmore 1999). Customization provides customers with an increase in utility in the form of a product that better meets their needs than the best, standardized product available (Huffman and Kahn 1998, Piller 2006). However, the process of defining, configuring, matching and modifying the product as well as the cognitive effort of gathering information, comparing offers (Dellaert and Stremersch 2005, Blecker et al 2004) and the perceived risk (Salvador and Forza 2004) lowers customers’ willingness to choose an individualized product.

Previous research on mass customization has focused mainly on the company’s point of view, examining the optimization of the production process and the cost structure (Pine 1993, Tseng and Jiao 2001, Kotha 1995, Hart 1995). Furthermore, there have been attempts to assess customers’ willingness to pay a premium for products that meet their individual needs (Kamali and Loker 2002, Franke and Piller 2004). Arguments for and against adopting mass customization have been analyzed and reported in previous research (Pine 1993, Tseng and Jiao 2001, Kotha 1995, Hart 1995). The customer’s perspective, though, has received little attention so far. Consumers can design their own products by enhancing a core product with standard and individually designed components, which then comes close to their ideal products (Pine, Peppers and Rogers 1995). However, they are often faced with a substantial additional effort required for information search, the increased cognitive load associated with configuring products (Wind and Rangaswamy 2001, Dellaert and Stremersch 2005, Blecker, Abdelkafi, Kahuza and Kreutler 2004, Salvador and Forza 2004, Huffman and Kahn 1998, Piller, Moeslein and Stotko 2004), higher costs for customized products, and sometimes also longer waiting times (Salvador and Forza 2004). Thus, customers’ costs and benefits of individualized offerings need to be assessed. However, the literature review has highlighted that no comprehensive model explaining the customers’ level of individualization has been developed yet. To fill this gap, this paper investigates the individualization of products theoretically and empirically, examining consumers’ costs and benefits. It compares different forms of (1) value creation in the form of symbolic, functional, hedonistic benefits (Park et al 1986, Richins 1994, Cooper and Inoue 1996, Gilmore and Pine 1997, Strebinger 2002) and (2) additional efforts for consumers pertaining to time, cognitive efforts and money. To this end, this paper develops a model explaining the level of individualization using those variables that determine a customer’s cost-benefit ratio of individualization. This model is tested for the product category of automobiles.

Method

In cooperation with a big European car manufacturer, computer-assisted face-to-face interviews with 507 Austrian car owners were carried out in January 2005 based on two qualitative pre-studies (interviews with 31 customers and 25 experts responsible for mass customization within the company). Respondents of the quantitative study were 38.63 years old on average (SD: 16.08), with 50% being female and 50% male. In the course of the interviews an ‘optimized’ car configuration software was integrated into a computer-based questionnaire with mostly standardized questions. The respondents were asked to upgrade a given standard car model with additional equipment. The software displayed the buyer’s choices, along with pricing information and offers much more options for individualization than software solutions of existing car manufacturers, e.g. the possibility to choose different forms of headlights or radiator grills. 97% of the respondents designed their individual car model. The interviews and the car configuration took an average of 58.2 minutes. Validated scales were used to consider the independent variables in question (Laurent and Kapferer 1985, Jain and Sriviasan 1990, Lastovicka and Gardner 1979, Tepper et al 2001, Lynn and Harris 1997). Data analysis was carried out with structural equation modeling using AMOS 5.0. All items loaded significantly on their corresponding latent factors. The measurement model was validated before testing the structural equation model and was confirmed after eliminating a few items. Overall, two factors (variety seeking and subjectively perceived delivery times) with three indicators each were examined, since they did not meet the levels of reliability and validity required. The adjusted indicators were then analyzed again. Indicator reliability of the variables was then between 0.4 and 0.9, factor reliability between 0.6 and 0.9 and average variance extracted between 0.6 and 0.9. Symbolic, hedonic and functional benefits were measured using single indicators, as was the dependent variable “number of optional automobile features selected”. All three indicators were observed directly. The proposed model of positive and negative effects on the selection of optional automobile features was tested with AMOS 5.0 using a structural equation model and maximum likelihood estimation. Since not all data conformed to a normal distribution, a bootstrap estimation was performed, which essentially yielded the same results than the ML-estimation. The chi-square was significant (1.77). The comparative fit index (CFI) (0.93) and the normed fit index (NFI) (0.96) were above the benchmark of 0.90. The standardised RMR was 0.05 and the RMSEA 0.04. The model fit can be regarded as being good and the tested model can be accepted.

Findings of the study

As expected the number of optional features chosen and therefore the dependent variable “level of individualization” is strongly influenced by functional (standardised regression weight: 0.21) and hedonic benefits from automobile customization (0.27) as well as by the desire to own an individualized automobile (0.47). As expected, knowledge about automobiles increases a person’s specific self-confidence when deciding on an automobile (0.29). Lack of specific self-confidence for automobiles thus does not appear to be an obstacle to selecting a very individualized automobile (0.06). The perceived risk of choosing the wrong automobile or the wrong features may be easily reduced, for example, by gathering information and advice. Contrary to expectations, involvement in automobiles provides only an indirect explanation of the number of features selected (level of individualization) via the route of product knowledge. High involvement in automobiles has a positive effect on the knowledge about automobiles (0.76). As expected, the greater the knowledge about automobiles, the higher is the level of individualization (0.17). The reason for the indirect effect of product-class involvement may be the absence of hands-on product knowledge. Although involved customers continuously process information about automobiles, their knowledge about optional features is of a general and less concrete nature.

As expected, consumers’ willingness to pay for automobiles turned out to have a positive effect on the number of optional features selected (0.15). However, it is not influenced by the desire to own an individualized automobile. Rather, it is affected by people’s product-independent, general desire for individualization (0.32). People to whom individualism regarding products and brands is generally
important have a higher willingness to pay for automobiles. People with a strong need for individualism are clearly more willing to pay more for individualized products in many product categories.

As hypothesized people’s general, product-independent desire for individualized products and brands has a positive effect on their desire to own an individualized automobile (0.51), with the latter directly and positively influencing the selection of optional features (level of individualization) (0.47). Thus, if a customer wants to own a unique automobile, s/he chooses more optional features when configuring an automobile. The general desire for individualism regarding products and brands only has an indirect effect via the product-specific desire for individualization.

Contrary to what the model predicts, people who decide on optional features primarily because of symbolic benefits do not select more optional features (0.04). Symbolic benefits seem to be product-independent and rather abstract (Snyder 1974, Park et al 1986), since they have an indirect effect rather than a direct one via the general preference for individualism regarding the number of features chosen (0.27). However, hedonic or functional benefits, which are product-related and concrete (Bhat and Reddy 1998, Leclerc et al 1994), have a strong, positive effect on the number of optional features selected (0.21; 0.27). Hedonistic benefits affect the number of optional features chosen not only directly but also indirectly via the general desire for individualism regarding products and brands (0.34). For people who desire more individualism in general, symbolic and hedonistic aspects play a dominant role for the selection of optional features. The three types of motivation for choosing optional automobile features are not independent of each other, since consumers purchase bundles of benefits.

The cognitive search, information, and concentration efforts associated with customizing automobiles are lowered by product-class involvement (0.38), but not by knowledge about automobiles (Alba and Hutchinson 1987, Blecker et al 2004, Huffman and Kahn 1998). These efforts also turn out to be marginally significant barriers to individualization: The higher consumers perceive the cognitive effort associated with individualizing automobiles, the lower is the level of individualization (the number of optional features chosen) (0.25). As expected, the intensity of the desire to own an individualized automobile plays a role in this regard: Consumers with a strong desire to own an individualized automobile perceive the cognitive search, information and concentration efforts associated with customizing an automobile as lower (0.52).

Conclusion

Overall, the results of this study on automobiles suggest that the success of individualized products strongly depends on customers’ subjective cost-benefit ratio of individualization, which has been paid very little attention in previous research, both costs (money, time, cognitive efforts) and benefits (symbolic, hedonistic, functional) need to be viewed in a more differentiated fashion than previously and from a company’s perspective, it should be studied thoroughly how consumers benefit from different forms of individualization, since this has an impact on how they evaluate individualization. If an individualized product provides consumers mainly with functional benefits, companies should emphasize the problem-solving capability of the individualized product in their external communication. Conversely, symbolic benefits pertain to a rather general, abstract desire for uniqueness when purchasing or using the product. Consumers who want to stand out from the crowd and be perceived as special are attracted by the emphasis on symbolism, prestige, and self-expression in advertising and product descriptions. Hedonistic benefits are at a mid-position between functional and symbolic benefits, materializing when using particular product modules or when enjoying the product with all five senses. External communication with consumers should thus focus on both the product and the additional benefits.

Thus, manufacturers have to adapt their communication strategy to the leading type of motivation–problem solving for a function-oriented customer, the promise of prestige and uniqueness for a symbolic-oriented buyer of car equipment and both problem solving and the promise of enjoyment for a hedonic-oriented customer.

The configuration software used for the survey has turned out to be a very useful data collection tool. When combining personal data and car configurations, data of individuals and/or target groups can be analyzed and interpreted. This makes it possible to identify not only an “ideal product” from the perspective of customer groups, but also to identify the configuration process most appropriate for specific individuals or target groups. The “Car Configurator” used for the study was evaluated very favorably by users. This configuration tool could also be used for an online survey. Given that this study was conducted only in Austria, future research should replicate this study using a global sample. It is likely that consumers’ attitudes toward purchasing and owning automobiles differ across different countries.

Furthermore, this study is confined to the product category of automobiles, which limits the generalizability of the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable “level of individualization” for other product categories. For example, there is a high enduring involvement in automobiles because of its high social importance to most drivers. This may not be the same for products such as PCs or vacations. It may be assumed that product knowledge, cognitive effort, willingness to pay for individualized products, and the desire to own an individualized product have a strong product-independent influence on the selection of individual product modules. To test this, individual configuration processes as well as the positive and negative factors influencing the choice of individual product components need to be studied in other product categories such as home furniture, vacations or consumer electronics (TV, DVD player, or PC).

Delivery times seem to be a critical factor in the decision whether or not to individualize a product, as the exploratory findings of pre-study 2 (with 25 experts) suggest, focusing on the reasons why the respondents did not individualize their automobiles. In view of the problems regarding the measurement of this factor, it should be examined in a follow-up study.

References

Consuming a Political Figure: A Post-Structuralist Reading of Four “Political Products”

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The extent to which contemporary politics are determined by market considerations (Bourdieu 1998) and the level of politically inspired consumption are unprecedented (Baudrillard 1988, Micheletti 2003). Some observers describe this state of affairs as a capitulation of the state sphere brought on by the omnipotence of the market sphere (Godbout and Caille 1998). On the other hand, the situation can also be perceived as a gradual erosion of the division between the modern categorization of the state and the market. Nowadays, we are also be perceived as a gradual erosion of the division between the modern categorization of the state and the market. Nowadays, we are...
bureaucratic individualized actions such as consumption activities. Along similar lines, Micheletti (2003) introduces the notion of “individualized collective action” as a form of contemporary political activism. Ironically, the existing research building upon these premises by and large explores the politically inspired consumption of products such as food or fashion items (Crockett and Wallendorf 2004; Murray 2002; Shaw and Newholm 2002), while the consumption of politics itself has attracted less interest.

Considering the burgeoning commercialization of politics, the limited interest in the consumption of politics is peculiar to say the least. The influx of novel ways in which the market appropriates politics commands attention. For instance, recently we have faced a proliferation of politically inspired entertainment (e.g., movie-documentaries such as Fahrenheit 9/11) coupled with the explosion of politically charged web products ranging from computer games, video clips, and music to an assortment of political merchandise (e.g., T-shirts, stickers, coasters). These “political products” are generally related to prominent political events and/or revolve around infamous political figures. Among the latter type the craze surrounding US President G. W. Bush is quite exceptional in terms of both its global scope and diversity. For example, consumers can consume this political figure through various computer games, documentaries, books, and merchandise.

My research delves into political consumption in an ex-socialist European setting by exploring a set of G.W. Bush-related products: a collection of four books written by Marcel Stefancic, a Slovenian pop-philosopher, film critic, legendary infotainment host, and journalist obsessed with American politics. In addition to revolving around a global political figure, these four products of popular culture touch upon a number of global socio-political issues. As a result, they offer fertile grounds for an exploration of the symbolic aspects of political consumption. The four texts were analyzed by drawing upon the literary criticism tradition (Stern 1989). Specifically, a post-structuralist reading was adopted to generate and examine the central binary oppositions that underpin the text and which are relevant to our discussion (Brown 1996). In line with Currie (1989, 5), these binary oppositions represent an “unstable basis for meaning, a place where the values and hidden ideologies of the text are inscribed.”

The four analyzed texts include Bush’s America (published in 2001), The Bush Code, Bush’s Legion (both 2004) and Bush’s Resurrection (2005). At first glance, the collection offers a neat chronological review of the President’s incumbency, beginning with the 2000 US elections and the events surrounding 9/11, continuing with the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, and concluding with the 2004 elections and the ensuing events. On the other hand, the texts position G. W. Bush in a very wide socio-historical framework, employing this political figure as an emblem of contemporary politics. As such, the hero represents a powerful catalyst for heated discussions regarding the crisis of democracy, hegemonic international relations, and the place of religion and business in politics.

Whereas several elementary binary oppositions underpin the texts (e.g., capitalism vs. socialism, business vs. politics), the opposition between truth and falseness is of particular interest to our discussion. This fundamental opposition underpins the complex socio-political discussions surrounding G. W. Bush, who throughout the four texts serves as a symbol of deceitfulness and corruption. The author meticulously maps the historical “lies of American politics” (e.g., Vietnam, McCarthyism, Iraq) to construct the overarching narrative of “Bushist” hegemony. The delineated hegemony is twofold as it subsumes the (internal) deceitful subordination of the American public and the (external) aggressive extortion of the international community which together offer a unique reference point for a collective identification of “anti-Bushists” across the globe.

What is more, the falseness of contemporary (American) democracy is further illustrated by the hold that religion and business have on politics. The author outlines “a typical Bushist” as being a “polished combination of an ideologist, a consultant, a businessman and a hardcore hawk”. This illustration eloquently stresses the deceitful, self-interested aggression of Bushist politics as perceived through the lens of an ex-socialist European pop-philosopher. In essence, what we are faced with is Stefancic’s ‘truth which, notwithstanding its criticism of the market and religious ideology, is itself set to be consumed by an array of faithful followers. It is a truth assembled from numerous political products (e.g., anti-Bushist websites, documentaries) which are offered as signs leading towards “the truth”. As such, political products generate cultural spaces in which specific truths and realities can be constructed and consumed. The playful nature of these cultural spaces enables their “producers” to criticize fictitious politics through fiction (i.e., in this case a fictional literary work). Such paradoxes and the underlying production and consumption of playful realities represent an interesting topic for consumer research of both playful consumption and political consumption.

References
Lifestyle, Shopping Orientation, Patronage Behaviour and Shopping Mall Behaviour--A Study of South African Male Apparel Consumers

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The competitive and lucrative nature of the South African apparel market is unquestionable. The projected value of the industry is $7.4 billion by the year 2009, with menswear sales growing substantially and contributing 34.4% ($2.1 billion) to the annual apparel sales of $6.1 billion in 2004 (Datamonitor, 2005, p.3). Male apparel consumer behaviour has developed substantially to warrant further research in order to meet their needs in terms of store design, location, merchandise, customer experience and service provision (Bakewell, Mitchell & Rothwell, 2006). In South Africa research on male apparel shopping behaviour is relatively uncharted (Warrington, 2005).

Objectives

The objectives of this paper on male apparel consumers are to (1) describe their shopping mall behaviour (2) determine if they could be clustered according to lifestyle, shopping orientation and patronage behaviour and (3) profile clusters based on demographics, lifestyle, shopping orientation and patronage behaviour.

Literature

Lifestyle and psychographics address the way in which consumers express themselves in a social and cultural environment. Consumers’ lifestyle and value systems are not only shaped by their family, friends, community and significant events, but also by the era in which they were born (Bakewell et al., 2006; Godrington, 2001a). In South Africa many apparel retailers apply the Saarf Living Standards Measure (LSM) groups to define their target market. To increase the relevancy of these LSM groups, Consumer Scope (2005) introduced four Lifestyle Levels (based on LSM clusters), namely the Bottom, Mass, Emerging and Established Markets.

Due to constant social, cultural and economic changes shopping orientations (shopping activities, interests and opinions) differ over generations (Stoltman Gentry & Anglin, 1991). This supports the generational cohort approach to segment markets (Godrington, 2001b). In order to comprehend patronage behaviour, retailers must understand the determinants of consumers’ shopping orientations. Consumers with different shopping orientations have different consumer characteristics and market behaviour (Shim & Kotsiopulos, 1992a; Stoltman et al., 1991).

According to Assael’s Model of Store Choice (1995, p.630) consumers’ attitudes towards and perceptions of the store’s image and attributes, as well as the influence of in-store stimuli, influence patronage behaviour. Variables such as personal characteristics, information sources and store attributes could determine store patronage (Shim & Kotsiopulos, 1992b). South African consumers’ store choice depends on their lifestyle level (Consumer Scope, 2005).

Research on shopping mall behaviour indicates, amongst others, that age groups differ regarding preferences for mall attributes (Anderson, Burns & Reid, 2003); entertainment available could influence mall choice (Wilhelm & Mottnet, 2005) and décor of a mall is important for apparel consumers (Baker & Haytko, 2000). Certain retailer factors influence male shoppers’ enjoyment, namely shopping-centre features, ancillary facilities, value-added features and special events (Lee, Ibrahim & Hsueh-Shan, 2005). Thus, a mall’s management strategies must become more customer-centred (Knee, 2002, p.531) and provide a positive total customer experience (Berry, Lewis & Haeckel, 2002, p.86).

Methodology

The store intercept method was used to collect a convenience quota sample (n=297) of male apparel consumers aged 20–35 years. They were young buyers (57% between 20–24 years), mainly representing the Coloured population group (48%), English speaking (58%) and single (74%). The majority completed grade 12 (92%) and reported an apparel expenditure of more than R500 a month.

The questionnaire comprised five sections. A five-point Likert type scale was used for sections B, C and D. Shopping mall behaviour (Section A=6 items) covered mall patronage, shopping companions, mall activities and time spent shopping. Lifestyle (Section B) comprised 23 items adopted from Du Preez (2001) and Shim and Kotsiopulos (1993). Section C (Shopping orientation) used 22 items covering seven shopping orientation categories proposed by Visser and Du Preez (2001). Section D determined patronage behaviour regarding 11 menswear stores (discount, speciality, department and signature stores) and Section E included demographics.

The data was subjected to the following analysis: Descriptive statistics, reliability analysis and factor analysis for the lifestyle and shopping orientation scales (principle component extraction with varimax rotation and Kaiser normalisation). Hierarchical cluster analysis was done to establish whether respondents could be divided into distinct groups based on differentiating variables. One-way ANOVA and Post-hoc Bonferoni analysis were performed (Dillon, Madden & Firtle, 1994; Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1998).

Based on these analyses, profiles of the clusters were compiled.
Results

The respondents’ shopping mall behaviour differed regarding motivation for patronage, shopping companions and preferences for mall activities. Reliability analysis showed acceptable coefficient alpha levels for lifestyle (α= 0.76) and shopping orientation (α= 0.84). For lifestyle, eight principle components were extracted, explaining 59% of the variance, i.e. apparel-oriented, visual and performing arts-oriented, media-oriented, socialising-oriented, sport-oriented, published information-oriented, relaxing-oriented and family/community-oriented. Three shopping orientation components were extracted that explained 52% of the variance, i.e. shopping self-confidence and enjoyment; credit-prone brand conscious and fashion innovating as well as local store patronage. These results partly support those of Du Preez (2001).

All the variables differed significantly between the clusters with the exception of local store patronage shopping orientation. Cluster analysis was performed with the remaining 21 clustering variables (8 lifestyles; 2 shopping orientations and 11 patronage behaviour variables). A four-cluster solution yielded the most interpretable results. Labels were ascribed, i.e. Cluster 1 (38%): Traditionalists; Cluster 2 (19%): Shopping enthusiasts; Cluster 3 (30%): Dynamics and Cluster 4 (13%): Laggards.

Cluster 1 included the older male consumers (25-35 years). Cluster 2 had the highest average monthly expenditure on apparel. All four clusters described themselves as media-oriented (lifestyle). Cluster 2 was the most and Cluster 1 the least apparel oriented (lifestyle). Shopping self-confidence and enjoyment was the dominant shopping orientation for the four clusters. Clusters 2 and 3 portrayed a high shopping self-confidence and enjoyment shopping orientation. Cluster 1 obtained the lowest scores for both shopping orientations. Although the clusters differed pertaining to preference for male apparel stores they mostly shop at speciality stores. Cluster 2 comprised the most active shoppers.

The research findings cannot be generalised due to the exploratory nature and limited scope of the study. Managerial implications include designing an entertaining shopping environment, developing non-traditional persuasive communication messages, building brand personality and brand image as well as cultivating niche markets.

References
Perceived Justice and Customer Satisfaction Following a Service Failure and Recovery

Encounters. An Approach from Script Theory

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The role of service failure and recovery attempts has received considerable attention in the study of satisfaction with service encounters (e.g. Beugre and Viswanathan 2006; Blodgett, Hill & Tax 1997; Maxham III and Netemeyer 2002; McColl-Kennedy and Spark, 2003; McColough and Berry, Yadav 2000; Smith and Bolton 2002; Smith, Bolton and Wagner 1999; Tax, Brown & Chandrashekaran 1998; Wirtz and Mattila 2004). Among the different psychological variables proposed to explain this relationship, consumer perceptions of justice or fairness have received considerable attention. Research in this domain has focused on the impact of the failure/recovery on three dimensions of perceived justice: distributive, procedural and interactive, as well as the impact of these dimensions on satisfaction (e.g. Beugre and Viswanathan 2006; Oliver 1997; Oliver and Swan 1989a; 1989b; Smith and Bolton 2002; Smith, Bolton & Wagner 1999).

Although perceived justice has proved to be as a useful predictor of satisfaction in this kind of encounters, little is known about the kind of comparison standards used by consumers to judge such encounters as fair or unfair. In this study it is assumed that consumers apply service scripts as comparison standards to evaluate fairness service failure and recovery attempts.

Script theory has been used by some researchers in the study of service encounters (Bateson 2002; Bitner, Booms and Mohr 1994; Mohr and Bitner 1991; Solomon, Surprenant, Czepiel & Gutman 1985). There is evidence that consumers have scripted knowledge about different consumption experiences, such as restaurants, or various shopping activities (Bower, Black & Turner 1979; Bozinoff and Roth 1983; Smith and Houston 1983: Sierra, Falces, Briñol & Horcajo 2002; Stoltman, Tapp & Lidapit 1989).

Scripts are defined as schematic knowledge about the typical action sequence in a consumption setting that guide consumer expectations about the appropriate behaviors and outcomes in that context (Abbott, Black & Smith 1985; Abelson 1981; Schank and Abelson, 1977; Smith and Houston, 1983). Script actions have different perceived relevance (Maki, 1990; Mandler 1984). Actions that include consumer-provider interaction are viewed as most relevant (e.g., ordering food).

Due to their dynamic nature, scripted structures must incorporate mechanisms capable of interpreting the presence of mismatching information, such as the interruption of the action sequence that normally leads to script goals (Schank and Abelson 1977; Mandler 1984). Schank and Abelson (1977) distinguish two types of interruptions: obstacles and errors. Obstacles result when an imminent action is missing or when the flow of actions is blocked in some way (e.g., you have a reservation but your table is occupied). Errors are incorrect actions or actions that lead to an inappropriate or unexpected outcome (e.g., you ask for a non smoking table but are assigned a smoking one). In both cases, some kind of corrective action is expected to happen (e.g., to remind the waiter about your reservation) to recover from the failure that has occurred.

Various studies have found that scripts act as standards of comparison in evaluations of provider performance and satisfaction judgments (Bitner et al 1994; Mohr and Bitner 1991; Falces, Sierra, Briñol & Horcajo 2002; Sierra, Falces & Bautista 2006). Falces et al. (2002) found that satisfaction experienced by consumers was affected by the kind of script interruption, the relevance of perceived action and the outcome of corrective action. Based on this evidence we propose that service scripts will act as a comparison standard in evaluations of distributive, procedural and interactive justice.

How do scripts—as standards for comparison-relate to the evaluation of perceived justice dimensions? Because of distributive justice is based on customers’ perception of the exchange outcome, procedural justice involves procedures to solve the problem, and interactional justice is the way the customer is treated during the exchange (Clemmer and Schneider 1999), we formulated the following hypotheses.

Regarding script interruptions, they reflect action values that affect the appropriate advance or sequence to fulfill script goals, so it was expected that this dimension of script would affect procedural justice to a greater extent than distributive and interactive justice.

Action relevance reflects perceptions of the importance of each script action (Maki 1990; Mandler 1984). In service settings, actions that include interaction with the provider are viewed as the most relevant to consumers. Based on this, we hypothesize that action relevance affects mainly interactive justice, and to a lesser extent distributive and procedural justice.

Strong scripts often have prescriptions (e.g. corrective actions) to overcome obstacles or correct errors (Schank and Abelson 1977; Mandler 1984). The corrective actions are related to benefits or lack thereof, if they are finally successful in solving the problem. Therefore the outcome of these corrections influences not only the evaluation of what people achieve, but also the perception of the whole process and the people involved in it. Thus, we hypothesize that the outcome of corrective actions will affect all three dimensions of perceived justice.

Each participant had to read the description of eight failure and recovery encounter scenarios. The description differed in the type of action relevance, type of interruption and result of corrective action. After reading each scenario they evaluated script disconfirmation, perceived justice (distributive, procedural, and interactive) and satisfaction with service encounter.

The first study was conducted with 93 psychology students enrolled in a Spanish University. A 2x2x2 between-subjects factorial design was used. The factors were Script action relevance (high or low), Type of script interruption (obstacle or error), and Corrective action result (positive or negative). In accordance with our expectations, results indicated that outcome of corrective action was the most important determinant of all three dimensions of perceived justice, whereas script interruption predicted changes in procedural and interactive dimensions, and action relevance only had a significant impact on the interactive dimension.

In a second study, conducted in Chile with a sample of 407 participants, results were replicated, showing that script dimensions are precursors of disconfirmation and satisfaction judgments, and that perceptions of distributive and procedural justice partially mediate the effect of script disconfirmation on satisfaction.
Taken as a whole, both studies support the idea of script theory as a robust and useful approach in the prediction of satisfaction, and satisfaction related responses.

References
Ethnicity and Consumerism in Europe: Comparing and Contrasting France and the UK

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A number of studies have investigated consumption patterns of ethnic minority groups. These include the pioneering research of Hirschman (1981) on ethnic identification, by Wallendorf and Reilly (1983) on the impact of assimilation on food consumption; by O’Guinn and Meyer (1984) or Hui, Laroche, and Kim (1998) on media usage; by Stayman and Deshpande (1989) on situational ethnicity; by Jamal (2003, 2005) on the relation between marketing, ethnicity and consumption. However, most of this research is North American in origin and application and hence there is a research on ethnic minority consumption from a European perspective.

Generally speaking, ethnicity refers to some commonly shared features, including “a sense of common customs, language, religion, values, morality, and etiquette” (Webster 1994 p. 321). However, from an emic point of view, the self-prescribed definition of ethnicity is more relevant (Deshpande, Hoyer, and Donthu 1986). Here a respondent is asked to identify his/her ethnic group(s) that s/he belongs to and then to indicate the strength of identification with the chosen group(s). At this individual level, the process of self-ethnic identification involves a sense of belonging to a social group with an emotional significance and value of this membership (see for instance, Jamal 2003; Barth 1969; Tajfel 1981).

From a post-modern point of view, Jamal (2003) argued that ethnicity becomes an image and a style that one can conveniently choose and adopt. Following, Bouchet (1995), Jamal (2003) argued that ethnicity can be seen as a bricolage of self-identity construction based on the heterogeneous elements of cultural diversity in the society. This was supported by Firat and Venkatash’s (1993) view that the
traditional communities are progressively destroyed because of the modern quest to be liberated from the social bonds and give way to a society of individualism. Furthermore, our Western era is characterized by a search for creating the social link (Maffesoli 1996). Ethnicity refers to this re-emergence of earlier values: sense of tribal identification, religiosity, etc. (Cova and Cova 2002). While Jamal (2003, 2005) focused on ethnic consumer behaviour in the UK, nevertheless, France has some particularities on the field as the ethnicity constitutes a real taboo for managers, researchers or politicians. France is one of the European countries which represent the highest proportion of the population that is composed of individuals belonging to an ethnic minority. Our research tries to explore the effects of ethnicity on consumption behaviour in France by comparing and contrasting with the UK case.

The modern definition of the ethnicity in France has its origin during the colonial period. The first source of the French taboo on the ethnicity can be explained initially starting from this disturbing and not yet digested past. Historically, the concept of ethnos had used to facilitate the enumeration, the lifting of the tax or the recruitment of workers. In addition, the colonized people, in search of an identity, had developed an ethnic feeling which becomes to claim their differences. The second source of the taboo seems to be the French model as a nation-state that sees itself as universalist and egalitarian. It implies and entails the assimilation of individuals who have become citizens by choice (Hetzel 2003). It is because of this difficulty vis-à-vis its colonial past and its belief in the republican unicity that France does not refer to the ethnicity during decades.

Since the 80’s, the term starts to appear in the public discourse. Contrary to the Anglo-Saxon countries where the ethnicity describes a social process of cultural difference construction, in France, the point of view is more “exogenic” and French define the ethnics group of an individual according to an external point of view (and not according to how the individual feels himself). Any time, this approach is limited in practice, since contrary to the Anglo-Saxon researchers, in France, the questions about the ethnicity of the respondent is judged of an individual according to an external point of view (and not according to how the individual feels himself). Any time, this approach is limited in practice, since contrary to the Anglo-Saxon researchers, in France, the questions about the ethnicity of the respondent is judged very offensive. The French census does not use this category or any of which regarding ethnicity.

In France, the terms of ethnics group, community, religion, and tribe are used in an interchangeable way in marketing. These concepts are new, still badly defined and difficult to accept for a great number of people. For some individuals, the ethnicity in marketing carries the germs of the communautarism. Still today, some leaders or companies hesitate to use ethnicity because the segmentation by the ethnics group resembles segregation and can be interpreted like the exclusion of the majority. A new point of view is resolutely directed towards the internal face of the ethnic group (how they perceive themselves in relation to others in their own group). This new orientation in marketing is very recent (Jamal 2003, 2005) and needs exploration at a European level. In addition, prior research shows that some individuals from ethnic minority have a real need to express an identity and a membership to a group through acts of purchase. Similarly, the type and nature of state policies (i.e. whether these policies reflect pluralist, civic, assimilation or ethnist ideologies) can influence ethnic minorities and their consumption patterns. Consequently, we believe that ethnic consumers both in France and UK are likely to exhibit their identity through their shopping behaviours (e.g., shop at ethnic outlets). However, given the intergenerational differences reported by prior research, we expect variations in consumption patterns as per generations.

The purpose of this research is to explore the effects of ethnicity on consumption patterns by comparing and contrasting France and the UK. How do ethnical consumers define themselves in France and in the UK? How do they live the acculturation process in two different European contexts? What is the general impact of socio-cultural context (integration in the UK versus assimilation in France) on the ethnicity in everyday life? These are the questions that this research will address in order to uncover the relationship between ethnicity and consumption.

The research is based on an interpretative and qualitative research project carried both in the UK and in France. The study aims to investigate the consumption meaning and experiences of ethnic minority consumers: people of Pakistani origin in the UK and Maghrebian in France. The data obtained from ethnic consumers in the UK can be compared with those obtained in France for two reasons. Firstly, in both of two cases, subjects are Muslims. Secondly, these two origins are both a colonial history with the host country. The researchers, in both of two countries, are bilingual academic and communicate through the language of the participants. They are thus able to explore the social life of the participants.

References
Relationship Segmentation: Analyzing Donor Behavior for a Public Good

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Public goods are integral to quality of life and greatly enhance individual and collective well-being. Beyond the provision of basic necessities like public safety and security, public goods also facilitate the achievement of “the good life” resulting from the provision of law and order, health care, education, transportation, parks, arts and culture. For the most part, public goods are provided by government agencies and are funded by various types of taxes. Yet increasingly, agencies must also find ways to ease the financial pressure caused by budget cuts and escalating costs. Fundraising is now critical to the provision of many public goods: they depend on continued contributions from foundations, companies and individuals in the community.

Savvy fundraisers appreciate the importance of understanding donor needs and cultivating relationships with past, present, and prospective donors. Moreover, they know that giving is not an isolated act, but an interactive process that unfolds over time. The publicness of a good does not automatically imply that all people have the same needs or experience it in the same way; divergences in demand for and consumer contributions to public goods are inevitable. Accordingly, we assert the advantages of segmentation initiatives over mass-market approaches to the provision of public goods and fundraising. Our contribution is to develop and demonstrate a relationship segmentation approach to donor relationship management that aims to serve the diverse needs of user-donors in the customer portfolio.

We investigate the dynamics of how consumers perceive value in a public good and how these perceptions may shift over time and alter their propensity to donate. Specifically, we provide a diachronic analysis of primary data collected through 60 depth interviews with multi-year donors to public television. This research takes an important initial step toward producing dynamic segmentation schemes that explicitly recognize that customer needs and behaviors are susceptible to change, and proposes new ways to formulate donor profiles. Our relationship segmentation framework extends existing theories of customer-brand relationships (Fournier 1998), customer perceived value (Flint, Woodruff, and Gardial 2002; Reynolds and Olson 2001) and nonprofit marketing (Andreasen, Goodstein, and Wilson 2005; Gengler, Mulvey, and Ogletorpe 1999). The findings are not only of theoretical interest; they are also of great practical importance to fundraisers who have to sustain a steady flow of contributions over time.

Sample and Data Collection

We conducted depth interviews with 60 multi-year donors to public television (33 women and 27 men). Four sampling criteria were used to insure a balanced profile of participants in the study: number of donations, giving interval, geographic location, and donor age. The sample was drawn from the membership files of the three stations in the study.

A professional agency assisted with the field research by booking facilities and providing recruitment and screening services. Data were gathered in one-on-one interviews, each lasting approximately 45 minutes. Interviews were conducted by one of three members of a research team that included the authors.

The interviews were semi-structured and covered the following topics: (1) review personal television viewing habits and preferences, (2) probe decisions to give/not give to public television in the recent past and near future, (3) assess current and past personal value perceptions of public television, (4) identify potential threats to continued giving behavior, (5) discern changes in donor motives since making the initial gift, and (6) ask for ways to improve solicitation methods. After conducting the seventh interview, the team added another topic: (7) compare public television to other causes and charities the donor supported.

Analysis

The first step in analyzing the data was to identify salient themes in respondents’ value perceptions and donation behavior. The first author began by analyzing the field notes he collected while conducting or observing interviews in the first two markets. Data analyses followed the grounded theory approach, building thematic codes in an iterative and inductive process of categorization and comparison. Like statistical factors, thematic codes group disparate pieces of data into more inclusive and meaningful wholes. This initial attempt at data reduction extracted and mapped the common concerns that accounted for the rich diversity in donor value perceptions and giving behavior.

Next, members of the interview team met for a multi-day analysis workshop. To begin, the remaining interviews, collected by the co-author in the third market, served as a holdout sample to verify the scope and consistency of the findings. The results exhibited a high degree of concordance with the exception of a theme that appeared unique to the third market. Our attention then turned to using the interviews’ insights to further refine the themes and to develop an overall framework of donor giving and lapsing. Team members took turns at assuming a contrarian stance, noting inconsistencies, asking questions and presenting evidence that examined the data in new ways.
Field notes and interview transcripts were carefully reviewed to validate emergent themes. After several iterations, a consensus was reached. As a final measure of quality assurance, a research assistant was hired to provide an independent assessment of the dominant motivations and concerns of each respondent. Single-page memos were generated to summarize the essence of each transcript. These results were cross-checked with the team’s theme x case matrix and were used to catch any outlier ideas and idiosyncratic concerns that may have eluded initial detection.

Results

Our results yielded five segments of donors: (1) “Stakeholders” who felt they were part of the community, and were committed to the station whether or not they viewed the programming themselves or not; (2) “Steady Donors” who derive value from the programming, but also feel involved as part of the community; (3) “New and Sporadic Donors” for whom each individual donation is like a vote for / against current programming; (4) “Free Riders” who enjoy the programming but do not donate; and (5) Non-viewers. Our research defines in detail the sources of value each group derives from their involvement, and charts the causes for individuals move from one segment to another, either towards becoming Stakeholders or becoming less involved.

References


Scale Development: Importance of Apparel Store Image Dimensions

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Assessing consumer perceptions of store image is critical to ensure congruence between the image mix desired by the target market and the store’s projected image. Strategic management of store image requires an instrument to continually monitor store image.

Researchers investigated store image from different perspectives but only a few such as Menezes and Elbert (1979), Manolis, Keep, Joyce and Lambert (1994) as well as Dickson and Albaum (1977) endeavoured to develop and test instruments to measure store image. The diverse and even contradictory findings of the existing research could be partially attributed to the complexity of this construct but also to the variety of measuring instruments implemented by researchers. This further substantiates the need to develop a measurement scale based on previous research in the field of store image. It is also widely accepted that empirical validation of the conceptual extensions of theory is a critical element of the scientific process (Chowdhary, Reardon & Srivastava, 1998).

Objectives

Objectives of this research are to (1) develop a scale for the measurement of consumers’ perceptions of the importance of store image dimensions, (2) establish reliability and content validity, (3) assess the fit of the measurement model implied by the architecture of the instrument and the constitutive definition of the theoretical store image construct.

Literature

Specifying the domain and boundaries of a construct is instrumental in guiding scale development and assessment of validity (DeVellis, 2003; Netemeyer, Bearden & Sharma, 2003). Despite the absence of a clear definition of store image it can be deduced from literature that this construct comprises distinct dimensions (and sub-dimensions), including tangible (functional) and intangible (psychological) dimensions. An in-depth review of literature was done, covering seminal work (e.g. Martineau’s, 1958 & Lindquist, 1974–1975) and recent investigations (e.g. Sullivan, Savitt, Zheng & Cui, 2002; Wong & Yu, 2003; Koo, 2003; Grace & O’Cass, 2004). The information disclosed was used to delineate eight dimensions (Atmosphere, Convenience, Facilities, Institutional, Merchandise, Promotion, Sales Personnel, Service) and sub-dimensions (for each dimension) underlying the store image construct. These findings could also enhance the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the store image definition and contribute to domain specification.

Methodology

Churchill’s (1979) framework for scale development and recommendations from literature (DeVellis, 2003; Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson & Tatham, 2006; Netemeyer, et al., 2003), were used to identify a four-phase methodology. Only the first three phases are reported here.
Phase one: Domain specification and construct definition. A theoretical model delineating the relationship between store image and other consumer behaviour variables was proposed. Further to this, the Model of the underlying structure of store image was proposed. This model represented the construct definition and served as point of departure for scale development.

Phase two: Generating measurement items and finalising the scale format. A pool of 371 items was generated. These items were judged by subject experts and members of the identified sample population (face validity). A preliminary 232-item scale resulted.

Phase three: Purifying the scale. Two pilot studies were conducted employing convenience student samples (Pilot 1: n=89 and Pilot 2: n=173-two data-gathering sessions: n=72 and n=101). Statistical analysis of data aimed at establishing reliability and addressing scale length.

Results
Pilot study 1: Reliability results (coefficient alphas) for the store image sub-dimensions ranged from 0.56 to 0.85. Coefficient alphas (>0.7), item-total correlations (> 0.3) and inter-item correlations (0.2-0.4) were used as guidelines for acceptance of items (Blankson & Kalafatis, 2004; DeVellis, 2003; Netemeyer, et al., 2003; Nunnaly, 1978). This resulted in a 214-item scale administered in the second pilot study.

Pilot study 2: The first data set (n=72) was subjected to coefficient alphas analysis. Results were: Atmosphere (α=0.77), Convenience (α=0.81), Facilities (α=0.81), Institutional (α=0.64), Merchandise (α=0.78), Promotion (α=0.73), Sales Personnel (α=0.86) and Service (α=0.79). After item elimination (criteria as above), a scale of 198 items resulted. Scale length remained an issue.

Data from both data-gathering sessions were combined and a split sample approach was employed, identifying a development (n=107) and a test (n=66) data set. Reliability analysis was performed on both data sets. The results (development/test data sets) were: Atmosphere (α=0.83/0.72; 6 items), Convenience (α=0.80/0.62; 7 items), Facilities (α=0.86/0.61; 7 items), Institutional (α=0.84/0.70; 6 items), Merchandise (α=0.83/0.64; 8 items), Promotion (α=0.84/0.68; 8 items), Sales Personnel (α=0.88/0.79; 5 items) and Service (α=0.86/0.59; 8 items).

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) utilising principle axis factoring was performed on each subscale separately by forcing the extraction of one factor on the development data set. Items loading 0.5 or higher on their designated factors were retained resulting in a 55-item scale. A correlation analysis between the original scale (214 items) and the shortened version (55 items) was performed. Satisfactory values (p≤0.001) were obtained supporting the shortened version: Atmosphere (r=0.94), Convenience (r=0.90), Facilities (r=0.90), Institutional (r=0.87), Merchandise (r=0.90), Promotion (r=0.90), Sales Personnel (r=0.94) and Service (r=0.92).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed on the test data set for further refinement of the shortened scale (Hair et al., 2006). Each subscale was submitted to CFA separately to allow for the investigation of individual items. Some of the Goodness-of-Fit Statistics (e.g. RMSEA, NFI, AGFI) were disappointing, but the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) was more satisfactory: Atmosphere (GFI=0.90), Convenience (GFI=0.91), Facilities (GFI=0.87), Institutional (GFI=0.91), Merchandise (GFI=0.85), Promotion (GFI=0.92), Sales Personnel (GFI=0.91) and Service (GFI=0.81).

Taking into account all statistical indicators the 55-item scale was retained for further testing and refinement in this ongoing research. The values indicate that the model may still be substantially improved.

References


Tourism, Place and Narrative: Local Interpretations of Santorini
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The aim of this research is to explore the production and consumption of tourism place from the local residents’ point of view. The local’s role within the sphere of place consumption is not explored at the same length as the tourist, because of the guest/host binary that has been a traditional distinction in the tourism theory (see Smith 1978). Historically there has been a focus on the tourist as the one who consumes whereas the host is rarely defined (Sherlock 2001) and has been seen as performing for the tourist. In the developed world this distinction is changing and contested (Sherlock 2001), which calls for an exploration of the local element’s perspective in making and consuming tourism place.

In exploring the local point of view, we rely on the idea that narratives play an important role in the construction of place (Meethan 1996, Voase 1999, Stokowski 2002, Santos 2004). Following this notion, people make sense and thus construct their experiences of place through narrative. Jerome Bruner (2004) argues that the main mode through which people make sense of their life experiences is the narrative form and as a result, it is by narrative means that they also structure their experiences. The narrative is therefore a structure of meaning through which individuals understand their world. Individuals construct social reality through their narratives, but this process is mediated by the socio-cultural context in which they are embedded, because this limits the possibilities of the personal narratives (Hopkinson and Hogarth-Scott 2001). By looking at the narratives of local residents of a tourism destination, we are hoping to reach an understanding of how a sense of place is formed and how locals negotiate the meanings involved in this process.

The research involved 22 semi-structured “conversational” (Kvale 1996) interviews with local residents of the island of Santorini, Greece. The aim was to elicit the participants’ stories, which is why the topics of conversation revolved around a temporal context, i.e. their earlier memories, their experience of change, the current situation and their hopes for the future. The interviews were fully transcribed and their analysis following Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber’s (1998) holistic-content approach, which seeks to identify narrative themes by looking at the narrative as a whole and focusing on its content. The initial emerging themes form three senses of Santorini as a tourism space. These are Santorini as “harsh beauty”, Santorini as “business” and Santorini as “homeland”.

The notion of Santorini as “harsh beauty” evokes associations of nature as a feminine force, generous but also violent, which “gave birth” to the island. It has “endowed” the place with beauty, but as this was the product of extreme phenomena (volcanic eruptions), this is a peculiar kind of beauty, involving harshness, aridity and steepness. In this sense landscape is almost a synonym of nature, as it is nature’s product. This also evoked the notion of timelessness. Interestingly, traditional culture is also described as being “natural”, as embedded in the landscape, in contrast to the modern culture. Viniculture, for instance, is considered an inextricable feature of the landscape. The notion of beauty emphasises the visual aspect of place; Santorini seen as a spectacle for visual consumption.

Santorini as “Homeland” involves an emotional attachment to the place, as the place where one belongs. This involves notions of origin, of relations and childhood memories. It also revolved around the theme of actualisation, in the case of returning to Santorini after having immigrated to Athens. Furthermore, this also involved making Santorini one’s home, as some of the residents were not originally locals. They are also in pursuit of signs of community and the rural.

Finally, the notion of Santorini as “Business” demonstrates the centrality of tourism in the island’s life. In this sense, Santorini is a brand, with a “celebrity” status attached to it. This is associated with the discourse about tourism being the “heavy industry” of Greece, and Santorini one of the successful brands within the country’s portfolio of destinations. Hence, the island was often paralleled to an enterprise that needs to invest in infrastructure and marketing and use carefully its resources. This involves notions of the local as a service provider that has to make sure that he or she contributes to the tourists’ experience.

These narratives of place are interwoven in the construction of the multifaceted reality of Santorini as a tourism space. They are linked, but also contradictory. Tourism business is seen as the process through which the locals are able to continue making a good living on Santorini. In addition, “harsh beauty” is the core element of its attractiveness as a tourism brand. However, tourism business is also seen as destroying the beauty of the island and corrupting the local community. Furthermore, issues of importance to the local residents (such as health services) are overlooked because priority is given to the developments necessary for the tourism trade.

Ultimately, researching the consumption of tourism spaces has the potential to contribute to the discussion on the nature of (post)modern consumption. In the postmodern era people are increasingly spending their everyday lives in tourism spaces. This is because as places are experiencing the economy of signs, they are shifting from spaces of production to spaces of consumption (Lash and Urry 1994). This involves a de-differentiation of tourism (Urry 1990) from everyday life and the pluralization of the tourist experience (Uriely 2005). Tourism is not clearly distinct from other leisure activities and tourist space and time are less distinct from normal, everyday space and time. One does not need to leave home anymore in order to have a tourist experience. A trip to the themed shopping mall offers a touristic experience to local residents and visitors alike. Because of “its particular combination of the visual, the aesthetic, and the popular” the consumption of tourism is a prototype of the contemporary condition of the aestheticisation of consumption (Urry 1990: 87). The tourist is seen as a visual hyper-consumer (Hughes 1998) or as a metaphor of the (post)modern individual (Bauman 1996). A tourism destination like Santorini, serves as an opportunity for the investigation of the interpretations of place in the course of the shifting distinctions of host/guest as well as place of production/place of consumption and of the ways in which the inherent contradictions are negotiated.

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Self-Gift Behaviours of British Ethnic Minority Consumers
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Conceptualisation

The increasing size of ethnic minority groups has attracted researchers and marketers to target these groups to gain a better understanding of how their consumption behaviour might vary from the host markets (McCullough, Tan, and Wong, 1986; Cui, 2001). Much of ethnic consumer research was conducted to see the impact of acculturation on food consumption/preference (e.g., Jamal, 1998; Wallendorf and Reilly, 1983; Xu, Shim, Lotz and Almeida, 2004), on purchasing behaviour (e.g., Donthu and Cherian, 1994; Kim and Kang, 2001; Mulhern and Williams, 1994) and on media consumption (e.g., Khairstulah and Khairstulah, 1999; Lee and Tse, 1994). However, very few studies have explored the ethnicity and acculturation on self-gifting (e.g., Rucker et al., 1994). Some previous studies suggest that people engage in authentic self-gift behaviour as a means to communicate with one’s self, and to influence one’s self-concept and self-esteem (Mick and DeMoss, 1990b). Thus, studying the ethnic minority groups’ self-gift behaviour may lead to a more refined understanding of ethnic consumer behaviour.

Mick and DeMoss (1990b:328) define self-gifts as “products, services or experiences that are (1) personally symbolic self-communication through (2) special indulgences that tend to be (3) premeditated and (4) highly context-bound.” Self-gifts are partly differentiated from other personal acquisitions by their situational and motivational contexts (Mick and DeMoss, 1990a). People may give a gift to themselves as a reward for the accomplishment of a task, to reassure the self, to cheer up from feeling down or to celebrate public or private holidays (Mick, 1991).

In the study of self-gift and ethnic identity, Rucker et al. (1994) found that Asian Americans prefer to choose self-gifts rather than to receive gifts from others. Their result also showed that this group is more likely than Whites to favour experiences as self-gifts (e.g., watching TV or listening to music) over buying products or services. This finding runs contrary to suggestions by Mick and DeMoss (1990b), Olshavsky and Lee (1993) and Sherry et al. (1995) who indicate that consumers from non-Western societies, such as a group self-identified with Asian cultures, might be less accepting of self-gifts.

While self-gifting is clearly prevalent in western consumer behaviour, particularly in the United States, the question remains whether the propensity to self-gift is a widespread phenomenon among ethnic minority consumers. Moreover, very little is known as to how and why immigrants may choose specific goods, services, or experiences when acquiring gifts for themselves. Very few research has explored ethnic minority groups’ self-gift behaviour in a non-North American context. We, therefore, propose to examine self-gift behaviour of British ethnic minority groups. The study attempts to investigate why these groups may or may not engage in self-gifting and how ethnicity has an impact on their self-gift behaviour in different motivational situations.

Research Method

To comprehensively understand self-gift, Mick and DeMoss (1990a) suggest that it is necessary to apply various types of research methods. Open-ended questionnaire and diary method were used to conduct this study.

The survey examined the ethnic group’s self-gift behaviour during the Christmas holiday. Forty-four responses were collected from a convenience sample of British ethnic groups, ages 15 to 50, in the North-West area, the UK. These students and non-student adults were asked whether they would buy gifts for themselves, what they would like to buy, how they feel when they buy themselves gifts, and in which occasions they would buy themselves gifts. The demographic characteristics: gender, age, nationality and religion were used to assess the results.

Diary method was deployed to get a picture of the sorts of self-gift activities the ethnic groups are engaged in on a daily basis. The sample consisted of six men and nine women between 21 and 41 years old whose spent between six months and ten years in the UK. The sample limits to educated participants who possess a proficiency in English written communication. In this study, participants completed the measurements of ethnic identity in both objective and subjective approaches and the acculturation level. The respondents were then asked to describe their major activities in relation to reward, for example, to be nice to themselves or to cheer them up with self-gifts during
a period of five days. The questions asked about which kinds of self-gifts they did, why and how they chose to do those activities, and how they felt about them.

The written answers from both survey and diary were analysed by employing matrices and content analysis. Some coding categories were derived from past research and a few were created inductively to seek commonalities and differences across the questions (Mick, DeMoss and Faber, 1992). Prior research has shown that age, gender, education, and current financial situation can also be related to self-gifts. These variables were assessed. The study presents both descriptive and interpretive insights.

Preliminary Findings

This study found that self-gift is a widespread phenomenon among British ethnic groups, although not everyone would acquire self-gifts. The results of this study reinforce Rucker et al.’s (1994) findings that self-gift giving is no less acceptable to those with an Asian cultural heritage than those who grew up in a Western culture. Some commonalities of the propensity to self-gift are shared among Asian British respondents. For example, the respondents enjoy having something sweet to relieve stress. They are also more likely to prefer experiential self-gifts such as cooking, window shopping, watching TV and reading novels to cheer them up from problems at school or work. These self-gift activities make them feel happier and relaxed.

The results also supported prior findings of Mick and DeMoss (1992) and McKeage and her colleagues (1993) that the propensity to give self-gifts was negatively related to age; current financial condition was positively related to self-gift propensity; and clothing was the most mentioned product the consumers would like to buy. While self-gifting for rewarding and holidays was pre-planned, it was shown to be spontaneous when feeling down.

This research makes two main contributions. First, it expands our understanding of the ethnic consumers’ self-gift-giving contexts. It revealed how immigrants use self-gifts to cope with issues that they face in their day-to-day lives. This knowledge will help to extend the existing knowledge on self-gifts to a cross-cultural setting. Second, the study showed the relationship between ethnicity and self-gifting. The evidence provides an indication that British ethnic minority groups may represent a distinct market segment. Some marketing implications can be identified from these groups’ awareness and adoption of products, services and experiences to serve as self-gifts.

References

Voluntary Simplicity, Downshifting, and the Market Mythology of Simple Living

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Voluntary simplicity has been a relatively invisible form of consumer resistance, both in the real world and, perhaps as a consequence, in consumer research. However, the ideology of voluntary simplicity is becoming increasingly prominent in contemporary Western societies under its historical moniker of “simple living”. Celente (1997) predicted that voluntary simplicity would occupy a greater share of mainstream consumer consciousness in the 21st century and evidence to validate this claim abounds in popular lifestyle magazines and television shows.

Furthermore, voluntary simplicity is theoretically important because, unlike other consumer resistance behaviors that target an element of the production, marketing, or consumption process (e.g. brand boycotts), it is a rejection of consumerism en masse. As Ritson and Dobscba (1999) point out, to consume less, is “the ultimate act of rebellion” (p.159). To date, voluntary simplicity has been conceptualized primarily as a lifestyle (Leonard-Barton 1981; Craig-Lees and Hill 2002; Bekin, Carrigan, and Szmigin 2005; McDonald et al. 2006; Miller and Gregan-Paxton 2006), but also as a behavioral index (Leonard-Barton 1981; Huneke 2005), and social movement (Grigsby 2004).

This research (1) integrates prior research on the voluntary simplicity lifestyle, highlighting problems of typology; (2) develops a conceptual model of simple living as market mythology that untangles the simple living ideology from the voluntary simplicity lifestyle; and (3) delineates a narratological variance framework of simple living myths.

In the marketplace, the term “simple living” and several variants are frequently used to describe aspects of the voluntary simplicity lifestyle. This paper retains the use of the etic term voluntary simplicity to describe the lifestyle and employs it’s emic counterpart simple living to describe the popular market-mediated ideology. Voluntary simplicity definitions (Craig-Lees and Hill 2002, Shaw & Newholm 2002, Zavestoski 2002, Grigsby 2004, McDonald et al. 2006) are aggregated into a lifestyle of minimal, ecological, and ethical consumption while simple living is modeled as a market mythology.

Colloquially, the term myth is used to describe that which is generally believed to be true but is actually false. However, in the academic study of myths no veracity or fallacy is implicitly assumed by use of the term. Rather, a myth is defined as a belief or narrative in natural and social experience.

A variance framework of the simple living market mythology is delineated by drawing from historic essays, recent empirical literature, and content analyses of three different marketplace data sources: online forums, popular lifestyle magazines, and depth interviews with informants who self-identify with simple living. Less is more (Browning 1855) can be described as the soul of the simple living mythology. The frequently heralded recipe for a good life is less consumption (in economic and ecological terms), less careerism, less needless spending, less stress, and, in summary, “less distractions” (Gregg 1937/1977, Elgin 2000, Craig-Lees and Hill 2002, Shaw & Newholm 2002, Zavestoski 2002, Etzioni 2004, McDonald et al. 2006, and innumerable media articles). In the contemporary marketplace, this message is positioned as a narratological opposition to the more is more promotions of consumer culture. In a similar vein, small is beautiful (Schumacher 1973) captures the preference for human scale in the organization of communities and institutions. Other mythic themes include: the pathology of consumer goods and consumption activities, the ecological and ethical consumer, work-life balance and the demythologizing of money, the myth of individual agency and the myth of community.

The paper concludes with a discussion of how myths in general and the simple living mythology in particular are employed in advertising, entertainment, and corporate communications.

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An Exploration of Men’s Consumer-Brand Relationships
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Fournier (1998) provides a typology of fifteen consumer-brand relationships based on her case studies of three women. This typology is significant through its expression of the “legitimacy of the brand as an active relationship partner” (Fournier, 1998, p. 343). However, it is unclear whether Fournier’s results are relevant to a segment of growing interest to marketers – heterosexual male shoppers. In particular, men who are active consumers of fashion and grooming products are currently estimated to be nearly a quarter of the entire American male population (Byrnes, 2006). Due to this segment’s increasing importance in the marketplace, and the gap in understanding how men, in particular, may form consumer-brand relationships, it is useful to explore this segment further. This study examines the applicability of Fournier’s consumer-brand relationship typology to an important segment in today’s marketplace – male shoppers.

Methodology
Given the scarceness of research on gendered consumption, especially with regard to men, (however, see Belk and Costa 1998; Bristor and Fischer 1993; Holt and Thompson 2004; Ottes and McGrath 2001; Penaloza 2001) a discovery-oriented research approach (Wells 1993) was appropriate for this research. Fifteen informants, men ages 25-34, were selected for participation in this study. Two methods were used to explore the male informants’ brand relationships: in-depth interviews and shopping with consumers. The interviews followed the recommendations set forth by McCracken (1988) and delved into the informant’s shopping behavior, consumption practices, and brand relationships.

The second method, shopping with consumers, enabled us to directly observe how consumers shop for particular brands. The researchers followed the guidelines set forth by Lowrey, Ottes and McGrath (2005). In total, over 240 pages of single-spaced text were generated. In analyzing the text, the researchers carefully examined the data for the presence of the consumer-brand relationships identified by Fournier.

Findings
Based on our data, three of Fournier’s consumer-brand relationships are prevalent among the fifteen male informants: secret affairs, committed partnerships, and flings. The most prevalent relationship observed is the “secret affair” defined as being “highly emotive, privately held relationship, considered risky if exposed to others” (Fournier, 1998, p. 362). This is likely due to the fact that while increasingly in popularity, according to a 2006 study by Datamonitor, consumption of fashion and grooming products elicit feelings of embarrassment among men and may be stigmatized as feminine behavior. For example, Darren conceals his regular use of Lancome’s anti-wrinkle cream. He jokes with the researcher that he will “kill her” if she tells anyone in his social circle about this consumption behavior.

A second brand-relationship, the “committed partnership,” defined as “long-term, voluntary imposed, socially supported union high in love, intimacy, trust and a commitment to stay together despite adverse circumstances” (Fournier, 1998, p. 362) was also observed in the text. Again, because consumption of fashion and grooming products may not always be widely socially acceptable, some informants recognized that they may be open to ridicule by others. However, they still continued using specific brands for relatively long durations
of time because of the benefits they derived from the relationship. Before committing to Dove soap, Ben used Irish Spring because he thought it was more of a “manly soap.” In contrast, he viewed Dove as a “girl’s soap.” However, because of the smell and touch of his skin after using Dove, he is now a devoted consumer. His loyalty to the Dove brand, despite its association with femininity, indicates his high level of commitment to the brand.

In addition to the secret affairs and committed partnerships, several informants had “flings,” defined as “short-term, time-bounded engagements of high emotional reward, but devoid of commitment and reciprocity demands” (Fournier, 1998, p. 362). For example, William discovers Is Blue hair gel by “trial and error.” While he likes the product, he explains that he will “switch products if something is not working and something else has a better claim.” Thus, for William, there is little commitment to the brand, and the relationship only lasts until something better comes along. While three of the relationships detailed by Fournier are prevalent in the text, the balance of the consumer-brand relationships did not emerge. However, two new types of consumer-brand relationships were observed.

New Consumer-Brand Relationships Observed Among Informants

Men engaged in two new types of relationships, which we have labeled “cheap date” and “coach/mentor.” Cheap date is a voluntary relationship, low in affect, which is intensely driven through the consumer’s sensitivity to the cost attached to the brand. Michael states, “I love shoes but I don’t always wear my nice shoes. I wear the same old junk shoes…Watches, same thing. . . I have a really nice watch but what do I wear? My Timex.” Therefore, cheap date is fueled by the informants’ ability to connect with the brand, but only if it meets the criteria that it is inexpensive. Secondly, coach/mentor is defined as a highly affective, intimate relationship, often based on respect and admiration, which provides socioemotional benefits such as assistance in identity construction. The brands most often engaged by the informants as a coach or mentor were James Bond and Indiana Jones. While these are fictional movie characters, Fournier discusses how consumers often view “brands as if they were human characters” (1998, p. 344). Men in this study often discussed Bond with reverence and aspired to be like (and even consume like) the brand. Ben states, “Bond is the epitome of a guy…[he] wouldn’t use Old Spice, he would use some super rare Russian cologne. You can’t get any more manly.”

In summary, this paper extends the work of Fournier (1998) by examining its relevance to a particular type of consumer – the male shopper. This study reveals that while the existing typology is useful in explaining some of the relationships men assume when forming relationships with brands, new relationships may be applicable as well. By understanding how men form brand relationships, marketers can develop marketing strategies to effectively appeal to these consumers. Moreover, this research enhances our theoretical understanding of the male consumer who has largely been neglected in past consumer research.

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Donating to Arts Institutions as Reciprocating

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Donations for arts institutions are becoming more and more important since public supports are lowering all over the world. Arts institutions are pushed to collect donations by soliciting their audience, but audience seems not to answer their appeals (Chronicle of Philanthropy Survey 2006). Thus growing attention is paid by arts institutions managers towards tools that could effectively foster donations (McNicholas, 2004).

Several articles have been published on donating to charities: Andreoni (1990) has explored the relationship between donating and rewards, while others have investigated motivations for donating to charities and the decision process, by using different field methodologies and by considering donations of various amounts (Hibbert, Horne, 1996; Schlegelmilch, Diamantopoulos, Love, 1997; Sargeant, 1999; Bennett, 2003). Nonetheless, findings are sometimes contradictory: for some researches gender matters, while for others...
the age is one of the most important factors; some researches underline the role of different types of charities, while other researches stress the role of rewards (social and personal ones). Besides, these researches do not take into account the concept of indebtedness, but they try to gain a better understanding of phenomenon through the use of regressions on public data (Schlegelmilch, Diamantopoulos, Love, 1997) and questionnaires on reasons for donating (Sargeant, 1999; Bennett, 2003). Finally, these researches deal with charities and they do not deal with arts organizations. Although sometimes wide definitions of charities include arts organizations, the latter seem to be quite different from charities in the narrow sense. Charities deal with social aid and assistance, while arts organizations deal with the promotion of culture.

Literature on donating to arts institutions is quite poor and it seems to fail in thoroughly explaining the behaviour of donors when small amount donations are taking into account. In fact, this literature has investigated motivations for donating from the point of view of rewards people usually look for in donating (Goodden, 1994; Mathur, 1996; Kottasz, 2004). Thus this literature implicitly supposes that individuals donate to arts institutions because they expect a reward, that is calculated as economic reward (for instance discounts, uses of facilities, free subscriptions and so on), as social reward (joining a social network, gaining social consensus, up-grade social status, and so on) and as psychological reward (self-esteem).

This approach to donating could work when we consider donations of high economic value, like bequests or legacies; in these cases it sounds acceptable that donor takes time for deciding and thus he takes into account every kind of consequences, included advantages he could gain from donating to an art institution.

But, what does happen when people anonymously donate? Could we really think that individuals act for gaining rewards?

For trying to answer these questions, the literature on gift-giving can support us (Malinowski, 1922; Mauss, 1925; Belk, 1979, 1996; Belk and Coon, 1993; Campbell, 1987; Sherry, 1993; Larsen and Watson, 2001). Several papers on gift-giving have been published since the seminal contribution of Sherry (1993), where the author underlined that donating to charities is a form of gift-giving, but no article has investigated the relationship between gift-giving and donating: neither in the literature on gift-giving nor in the literature on donation.

We propose to investigate this lost piece of literature. In particular, we propose to adopt the point of view of reciprocating and we hypothesize that individuals donate to arts institutions for reciprocating something they perceive to have previously received by the art institution. It is not necessary that the previous gift from the art institution was directed to themselves: it is relevant that they perceive that a gift has been made towards the social group they feel (or desire) to belong. This would be consistent with the Balance theory (Heider and Newcomb, 1946): as far as individuals feel (or desire) to belong to a group that receives benefits from an art institution, they are induced to donate to it.

Our assumption means that not only altruism or self esteem or rewards push people to donate to arts institutions, but firstly a sense of indebtedness and reciprocating generates donating, at least when we consider anonymous donations of small amount.

The research uses an experimental design. Dependent variables are the willingness to donate. Independent variable refers to the perception of positive role of the art institution within the social group of belonging; it is measured by using direct questions (answers on a seven point labelled scale).

Some constructs act as moderator within this relationship: they are need for self esteem, being keen on arts, need for belonging, perceived efficacy of donating, attitude towards donating, social validation, geographical proximity and type of institution (Figure 1).

Need for self-esteem could moderate the relationship, since both reciprocating is perceived as a social desirable behaviour and, through reciprocating, individual confirms to himself his belonging to a specific social group. The concept is referred to self-esteem individual can obtain with respect to group he feels (desires) to belong. I will be measured using the Maslow’s scale.

Social validation acts as moderator of the relationship because it states that the role of the art institution is socially recognized, thus it reinforces the perception of positive efforts of institution towards the social group. It needs that social validation comes from the same social group the donor feels to belong. It will be manipulated through the stimulus.

Need for belonging acts as moderator since it enhance identification with the social group that is perceived as benefited by the art institution. It will be measured using the Maslow’s scale.

Perceived efficacy is recognized in social psychology literature as a moderator of individual action, especially when socially responsible actions are taken into account. It will be measured through specific questions and a labelled scale.

Attitude towards donating refers to past experiences of donating or volunteering of the subject or his elatives. It is measured through dichotomous questions.

Geographical proximity is referred to geographical proximity. It positively moderates the relationship, but its effect is mitigated by the effect of passion, depending on the international recognisability of the art institution. It will be manipulated through the stimulus.

Type of institution could impact on willingness to donate since arts institutions could be basically divided into museums and arts performing institutions. Differences in emotions which could be felt by visiting a museum with respect to listening to a concert or watching a dance can be.

The experiment uses a questionnaire for testing hypothesis. Questionnaires were built for testing stimuli and moderator variables. Stimuli were associated with a slogan on a fund-raising campaign of an art institution. Questionnaire asked on the efficacy of the slogan for convincing people to donate. The slogan was used just for making the cover story more credible and it is designed in order to remain the same for every experimental group, thus it does not influence the answers. The slogan was “Art needs you”, followed by a request for donating to a museum/orchestra and, eventually, by a sentence that contain the social validation stimulus.

Eight different questionnaires were built for testing between groups differences on three variables: type of arts institution (museum/orchestra), proximity (Montreal and Quebec-City while questionnaires were administered in Montreal) and Social validation (the presence or absence of the sentence “Last year this school’s students were the group of donors who gave the highest amount of money on average per individual to the institution”). Questionnaires have been administered to 280 students (each student received just one questionnaire) (Table 1).

Hypothesis we would like to test are the follows:
H1p1: perception of efforts done by an art institution towards the group the donor belongs fosters the propensity to donate to that art institution.

H1pa: relationship between efforts done by an arts institution and the propensity to donate is positively moderated by the donor’s need for self-esteem

H1pb: relationship between efforts done by an arts institution and the propensity to donate is positively moderated by the social validation

H1pc: relationship between efforts done by an arts institution and the propensity to donate is positively moderated by the geographical proximity.

H1pd: relationship between efforts done by an arts institution and the propensity to donate is positively moderated by the level of passion.

The research is still going on. Questionnaires will be administered on January and February to francophone graduated students of a Canadian university. Findings will be available by may 2007.

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The Effects of Graphic Visual and Text Warning Messages on Female Smokers and Nonsmokers’ Attitudes toward Smoking and Purchase Intent

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Introduction

Globally, tobacco is estimated to account for some 4.9 million deaths per year (World Health Organization 2006). In addition, smoking rates are increasing for women worldwide (WHO 2006). To address the global tobacco problem, a groundbreaking public health treaty, the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), was recently ratified by the World Health Organization (WHO). An important aspect of the FCTC is a “package labeling” provision that requires health warning information on the package that may be in the form of message text, visual (pictorial) information, or a combination of both text and visual forms (WHO 2006). Because the FCTC permits either text and/or visual warnings, research examining effects related to warning alternatives will be useful to global policymakers. The purpose of our study is to extend previous research by examining the effects of graphic visual and text warning combinations concerning the dangers of smoking while pregnant for a large sample of females.

Conceptualization and Predictions

The use of novel pictures in the graphic warning format is likely to facilitate such effects on consumer attitudes and intentions. In general, the research on the use of pictures in advertisements has shown positive effects on memory and consumer attitudes (Mitchell and Olson 1981). Affect-laden pictures have been shown to increase brand attitudes, and positively perceived pictures favorably affect attitudes toward the ad and brand (Mitchell 1986). More specifically, work on emotional appeals in persuasion and advertising (Agres, Edell, and Dubitsky 1990; Hirschman and Stern 1999) coupled with the survey results of Canadian smokers (Hammond et al. 2004) suggest that the addition of graphic visual warnings should have a noticeable impact on smoking attitudes and intentions to purchase. Although we expect the presence of a graphic visual warning to impact smoking attitudes and intentions, we are expecting interactions between the graphic visual and 1) smoking status (smoker versus nonsmoker) and 2) the presence of a text warning.

Methodology

To test the visual and warning message conditions, professionally designed, four color mock cigarette packages were created. The warning message stated “SURGEON GENERAL’S WARNING: Smoking by Pregnant Women May Result in Fetal Injury, Premature Birth, and Low Birth Weight.” The visual used was a picture of a newborn baby with health problems. The study was a 2 (visual warning) x 2 (warning statement) between-subjects design. The graphic visual warning conditions included either: (1) the picture of the baby with health problems or (2) no picture at all. The warning statement conditions included either: (1) the above statement about smoking when pregnant or (2) no warning statement at all. All other package information was invariant.

The study sample consisted of 1475 female participants who were members of a web-based research panel. The mean and median ages were approximately 39 years, slightly more than one-third of the participants were current smokers, and 80% previously had been (or currently were) pregnant.
Results

Effects of the Graphic Visual. Findings show significant effects of the graphic visual information, but there are interactions between the visual and smoking status factors. Specifically, the effect of the graphic visual on purchase intentions differs substantially between smokers and nonsmokers ($F=22.11$, $p<0.001$). For smokers, inclusion of the visual on the package results in a significant decrease in purchase intent (mean intentions are 3.21 without the visual and 2.39 when the visual is included; $t=-4.77$, $p<0.001$). However, the effect of the visual has a positive impact for nonsmokers as their intentions to purchase the cigarettes for a smoker they know become stronger when this package visual is included ($t=+2.24$, $p<0.05$).

Although results show a strong significant main effect of the presence of the graphic visual on the general attitude toward smoking ($F=28.50$, $p<0.001$), there is a significant interaction between the visual and smoking status factors ($F=29.25$, $p<0.001$). The presence of the visual reduces smokers’ attitudes toward smoking ($M=4.64$ and 3.80, respectively; $t=-5.51$, $p<0.001$). However, for nonsmokers, the effect of the visual on smoking attitudes does not materialize ($t=0.76$, $p>0.30$). There appears to be a “floor effect” in that the attitude of nonsmokers is quite unfavorable (approaching the absolute minimum scale value of 1”) regardless of the presence or absence of the visual.

Effects of Graphic Visual and Warning Message. Because the FCTC includes an option for presenting a combination of text and visuals, contrasts were used to assess differences between a package with both visual and message statements, relative to a package with only a text message. For smokers, results show that when there is a message statement only, mean purchase intentions are 3.23; adding the visual to the message decreases intentions to 2.37 ($t=-3.44$, $p<0.005$). Also in the case of smokers, when there is a message only, the mean attitude toward smoking is 4.89. However, it decreases to 3.89 when the visual is included with the message ($t=-4.46$, $p<0.001$). For nonsmokers, we see an increase ($t=+3.28$, $p<0.005$) in intentions to purchase cigarettes for their smoker friend when the visual is added ($M=3.20$) to the text message only warning condition ($M=2.53$).

Discussion

Given package labeling provisions of the FCTC that allow warning information as text messages, visual information, or a combination of the two, our primary objective was to examine effects of text and visual combinations concerning the dangers of smoking while pregnant. Findings show that effects on purchase intentions and smoking attitudes are much stronger for the visual warnings than the text warnings. Given the option of visual or text warnings, these data suggest that visuals are more effective for warnings concerning smoking when pregnant. However, given the option of combining visual and text warnings, it seems reasonable for policy-makers considering changes based on FCTC packaging options to choose to use both. Hopefully, the FCTC will usher in a time of greater tobacco control and communication efforts that will benefit not only individuals today, but future generations globally.

References


An Investigation on How Word-of-Mouth Valence and Product Tangibility Affect Product Attitude

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Word-of-mouth (WOM) refers to the informal communication between non-commercial parties regarding the evaluation of products (Dichter 1966; Singh 1988). WOM is more impactful than other marketing communications because the WOM giver has nothing to gain from sharing information and therefore tends to be unbiased and trustworthy (Schiffman and Kanuk 1997; see Chung and Darke 2006 however for discussion on potential bias in WOM). It is commonly believed to play a major role in influencing attitude, purchase intention, and decision making in general (Bansal and Voyer 2000; Bayus 1985; Mowen and Minor 1998).

In the existing literature on WOM, positive WOM is found to lead to a positive product attitude and encourages purchase (Herr, Kardes and Kim 1991; Holme and Lett 1977). Negative WOM is more potent though in influencing attitude and intention in the opposite
direction (Richins 1983; Mizerski 1982; Hennig-Thurau and Walsh 2003). Moreover, the impact of WOM is felt more strongly in the context of services than products. The reason is that services are intangible and require direct experiences to judge quality (Zeithaml and Bitner 2000). As such, WOM plays a crucial role in helping to reduce risk and uncertainty in purchase and consumption (Murray and Schläter 1990). The objective of this paper is to examine the impacts of WOM on attitude across intangible and tangible products. Specifically, we expected that NWOM would lead to a bigger change in product attitude than PWOM. We also expected that the change would be greater towards intangible versus tangible products.

Despite existing work that offers some support for the above predictions, we adopted a direct, and hence stronger, test of the effects of WOM valence and product tangibility on attitude and intention. Moreover, we chose to make our investigation in an online context. To a large extent, online WOM is an extension of traditional WOM. The internet simply provides more channels (such as forums, chat rooms, e-mail list servers and Personal World Wide Web pages) than before for people to give WOM. One advantage of online WOM is that it magnifies the impacts of the communication by offering a one-to-many type of information sharing.

An experiment was conducted to test our predictions. Subjects (Ss) were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions and individually participated in the experiment. A 2 (Product Tangibility: tangible vs. intangible) by 2 (Online WOM valence: predominantly positive vs. predominantly negative) between-subjects design was used to measure product attitude. Ss rated attitude twice: before and after viewing online WOM on the product, hence allowing for a direct testing of the impacts of WOM.

Depending on the assigned condition, each S read the online product description and rated his/her attitude towards the product. Next, S read a series of online WOM in the form of product reviews. Again depending on the condition, S read either predominantly positive or negative reviews. A filler task was then administered to clear short-term memory. After that, S again rated his/her attitude towards the target product. A final survey containing mainly manipulation check items was filled out before S was thanked and dismissed.

Four online platforms were created for the four experimental conditions. A watch and hairdressing services from a hair salon were chosen for the tangible and intangible categories respectively. These two categories were thought to be relevant for the subjects. A brief description (about 80 words) on each was developed to provide subjects with basic information on which to rate initial product attitude. The brand names of both were fictitious to prevent any prior brand knowledge and experience from biasing responses.

To manipulate online WOM valence, reviews on watches and hair salons were taken and edited from existing online platforms for realism. Two series of reviews resulted for each product, one for the predominantly positive and predominantly negative WOM conditions. Efforts were made to ensure that the two series were identical in content but opposite in valence. For example, while reading reviews on the watch, a subject in the positive (negative) WOM condition will read that “the strap feels so pleasant (unpleasant) on the wrist.”

Each subject filled out four questionnaires. The first one measured pre-WOM product attitude on a multiple-item semantic differential scale. All items are seven-point. The second questionnaire related to the filler task. The third one was identical to the first one but aimed at measuring product attitude after exposure to online WOM. The final questionnaire contained manipulation checks, demographic and lifestyle questions, and a suspicion probe.

Attitude indices were obtained for each product by averaging the attitude items, both before and after viewing online WOM (α’s>0.88). The pre-WOM attitude was subtracted from the post-WOM attitude to obtain the change in product attitude. The absolute value of the difference was used for analysis. (The resulting four absolute differences are tangible/positive-WOM=1.06; intangible/positive-WOM=1.33; tangible/negative-WOM=2.70; intangible/negative-WOM=3.16). An ANOVA on attitude change resulted in a WOM valence main effect in which negative WOM led to a greater attitude change than positive WOM across the two products (F(1,73)=69.4, p<.0001; \( \bar{\tau}_{\text{PWOM}} =1.19 \) vs. \( \bar{\tau}_{\text{NWOM}} =2.93 \)). There was also a marginal product tangibility main effect. Online WOM induced a marginally greater change in attitude on hairdressing service than on the watch (F(1,73)=3.1, p=.08; \( \bar{\tau}_{\text{watch}} =1.88 \) vs. \( \bar{\tau}_{\text{salon}} =2.25 \)).

The study has provided strong evidence that negative online WOM brought about a greater attitude change than positive online WOM, and hence confirmed findings in the existing literature. Upcoming studies will seek to replicate the observation across various product categories. The study has also provided some evidence on the prediction that attitude change tends to be greater for intangible than tangible products. Stronger evidence in future research in this regard will be sought. Given the wide accessibility of the internet to consumers, marketers, especially those in the service industry, will benefit from a deeper understanding on how WOM-induced attitude change may vary between products and services.

References
Behind Fever: Patterns and Motives of “Chinese Luxury”

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The world’s total luxury market exploded to $143 billion in 2005. Goldman Sachs Annual Report (2006) reveals an annual growth rate of 25% in luxury consumption demand in China, expected to top the world with 29% of world’s overall market share in 2015. “Go to China” is now the slogan for luxury companies.

“Chinese Luxury” is getting attention because luxury goods do not play the same role in China as in the West (Doctoroff, 2005). The emerging Chinese market binds with unique characteristics: more vanity oriented than taste; buying beyond affordability not to lose face; younger, between 20 and 40; favoring products but experience; preferring popular foreign brands and overt logo; mainly for gift-giving etc. In China, RADO watches are mostly owned by cab drivers, farmers or successful young entrepreneurs, with only a few belonging to the rich white-collars (Ram, 1994). Chinese desire conspicuous consumption before fully realizing basic needs. However, there are also rich consumers in China who are getting rational, seeking experience more than symbolic value, and stop pursuing status and vanity (Wong and Ahuvia, 1998).

The “Rarity Principle” suggested by Dubois and Paternault (1995) and Mason (1981) describes that if everyone owns a particular brand, prestige and dream component is taken away. Extant research found different relationships among brand awareness, purchase and dream value in different country settings (Dubios and Paternault, 1995; Wong and Zaichkowsky, 1999; Phau and Prendergast, 2000), spawning special interests and significance in exploring those relationships in the highly segmented and typically-featured Chinese market. Besides replicate the “dream formula” studies in US and HK, our work also turns to discover the motivations behind different segments’ luxury consumption.

Scale of luxury consumption motivations, developed following guidelines suggested by Churchill (1979), includes 22 items on three dimensions: Personal Motivation, expressing unique taste and individualism; Quality Motivation, seeking high quality; and Social Motivation, conforming oneself to the society. The questionnaire examined 36 brands with three measures, developed by International Research Institute on Social Change (RISC) in 1990 with appropriate changes: Aided Awareness, indicating brands respondents know; Recent Purchases, show brands bought in recent three years; and Dream Value, selecting 5 brands if offered freely. 1220 eligible questionnaires were collected in Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou and Hangzhou, the top four luxury markets in China, with necessary quota controls to cover a wider variety of respondents.

Respondents are categorized into four groups, based on number of brands they know and recently bought: Group 1 (374), know more and bought more; Group 2 (245), know more but bought less; Group 3 (163), know less but bought more; and Group 4 (438), know less and bought less. Correlation analysis reveals, in all the four groups, significantly positive influence on Value from Awareness, and positive relationship between Awareness and Purchase. Partial correlation controlling Awareness proves that Value is positively influenced by Purchase in all groups, while only in Group 2, significant relationship between Purchase and Value is found, which is negative, “Dream Formula”, expressing impact on Value from Awareness and Purchase, is tested using regression, resulting in consistent findings.

People in Group 1 are real luxuriers. They know much and bought a lot, enjoying extravagant life. Between-group comparison of the three motivations using ANOVA unveils that people in this group value all the three motivations significantly higher than the rest. For Group 1, both impacts from Awareness and Purchase on Value are the weakest, and only the impact from Awareness is significant and positive, with no significant influence from Purchase. Most of the group members are in their middle thirties, with very high income.

Group 2 is formed by luxury admirers, with plenty of luxury knowledge but bought few. They love widely known brands, but devalue the brands after they own. They have high Personal and Quality Motivation, but lowest Social Motivation. Their lowest average age and average income potentially explains their fresher purchase experience but richer luxury knowledge. They have been growing up with China’s opening-up process, blessed with easier access to information on luxury. This background incited their admiration and aspiration towards luxury, and nurtured their individuality: to be what they want. Regression found only significant impact from Personal Motivation on Purchase. They are too young to have strong purchase power currently, but they are the future luxury market.

Only in Group 3, there is positive relationship between Purchase and Dream Value, though not significant. People in this Group are the eldest with highest income, but know fewest brands and have lowest Personal and Quality Motivations. Regression proves only the significant influences from Social Motivation on Purchase. They are showy luxuriers.

The relationships among Awareness, Purchase, and Dream Value in Group 4 are similar to those in Group 1, with stronger positive impact from Awareness and stronger negative impact from Purchase. With both low level of awareness and purchase, people in this group, however, have the second highest level of the three motivations, lower only than Group 1. Educational index indicates their much lower level in schooling. Most of them are old, with higher income. They agree with luxury consumption and have relatively high motivation, but regression proves no influence on Purchase from their higher motivations. They are luxury outsiders.
In conclusion, Awareness is proved to have ultimate importance, and ought to be emphasized first, as across all different consumer groups, higher Awareness always leads to more Purchase and higher Value. The “rarity principle” seems to be inapplicable, since no significantly negative relationship between Purchase and Value is found, with even positive impact is evident in Group 3. For those above 35, purchase does not decrease the brand value; while for those young people under 30, exclusive distribution may help maintain brand value.

This study proves between-generation differences on luxury consumption. Richer experience, with historical influences, diversifies the older consumers. Motivational differences across consumer segments entail customized strategies in marketing communication. For older consumers in Group 1, 3 and 4, social benefits available from buying may very well serve as an incentive, while in Group 2, people value Personal Motivation more, and prefer brands which bring personal enjoyment or satisfaction. It is important to bring luxury brands closer, and make them visible and easily available for members in Group 4.

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**When a Purchase is Only a Click (or two) Away: Online Impulsive Buying Behavior of Women in Finland**

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The phenomenon of impulsive buying has interested researchers in consumer research as well as other related disciplines since the 1950s (e.g., Clover, 1950; Rook, 1987; Rook and Fisher, 1995; Vohs and Faber, 2007). Today, impulsive purchasing has become part of the core meaning of consumer society, as for example the trend of seeing shopping as leisure has led to a rise in impulsive buying. At the same time, Internet as shopping environment is becoming more important in the daily lives of consumers, as consumers make an increasing ratio of their purchases online. The Internet offers an interesting context for examining impulsive buying, as the online shopping environment creates some challenges especially for impulsive buying of physical goods—e.g. how to get immediate gratification from impulse purchases although only electronically downloadable products are available immediately after their purchase, and how to get ‘seduced’ into buying a product impulsively although the product cannot be experienced with all five senses. Although some previous studies have addressed the phenomenon of online impulsive buying (e.g., Adelaar et al., 2003; Costa and Laran, 2003; Kacen, 2003; LaRose, 2001; LaRose and Eastin, 2002; Madhavaram and Laverie, 2004; Zhang et al., 2007), little attention has been paid to how online impulsive buying is experienced by consumers.

Although at first the Internet was a man’s world, currently women are increasingly present on the Internet, also increasingly responsible for online purchases. In addition, impulsive buying in general has been related more to women than to men (e.g., Dittmar et al., 1996). The purpose of this study is to provide a qualitative, interpretive, exploration of online impulsive buying of women. More specifically, what are the ways of experiencing impulsive buying in the online shopping environment?

Altogether 11 Finnish women, aged 25 to 44, were interviewed personally and face-to-face about their online impulsive buying experiences. The interviewees were recruited through the longest running Internet panel in Finland. The panel was utilized to get contact with those panelists that have made an impulsive purchase on the Internet in the last 12 months. The interviews—each lasting about one hour—centered on the narratives or descriptions of interviewees’ experiences about concrete events of online impulsive buying. However, in order to examine the experiences in a larger context, the interviews covered also more general issues, such as the interviewee’s online and impulsive buying history, her shopping style in general, her interests and hobbies etc. Thereby, the interviews had resemblance with the principles of so-called episodic interviewing (Flick, 2000).

Mainstream research on impulse buying has conceptualized the phenomenon as something very extraordinary, non-rational, and saturated with emotion, having also often a negative tone (see Wood, 2005). However, as discussed by Wood (2005), the reality of consumer behavior today is somewhat different to that presented by the scientific discourse—consumers consider impulsive buying as neither out of the ordinary nor ‘akratic’ (i.e. action that is contrary to a buyer’s better judgment). Instead of conceptualizing impulsive purchasing behavior as something extraordinary, it can be viewed as a continuum ranging from planned purchase behavior to those pure, extraordinary impulse buying episodes—a similar view presented by Stern already in 1962. The view adopted in this study is to use the term ‘impulsive buying’ (instead of ‘impulse buying’), that includes also other types of unplanned purchases than only the purest type of
impulse purchases. Consistent with the view, the phenomenon was presented to the interviewees as ‘purchase decisions made on spur-of-the-moment’. Unless used by the interviewee, the interviewer avoided using words ‘impulse’ or ‘impulsive’ in order to avoid the negative tone that might be implicitly present in the meaning of the word.

Women’s experiences of impulsive online buying were all related to physical products, items ranging from clothes and accessories (for themselves or for their children) to books and from washable diapers for their baby to decorating items. Thematic analysis of the interviews indicates that the experiences of impulsive online buying were related to three themes, i.e. easiness of buying, going with the flow, and bundling products. Firstly, making purchases on the Internet was experienced as easy, even too easy, requiring only a few mouse clicks, and thus resulting easily also in impulsive buying. In addition, especially women with children related easiness of buying also to being able to make purchases from the comfort of your home, without the trouble of going shopping in brick and mortar stores. Secondly, online impulsive buying experiences were associated with feelings of going with the flow, i.e. getting excited about browsing the products in one or several webstores. Originally, the consumer might have had some purchases planned, but as a result of browsing the webstore, those plans changed and impulsive buying occurred in addition to or instead of the planned purchase. This occurred often in webstores which the consumer was familiar with. This flow-like state created while browsing was experienced as enjoyable, and as having quality time for yourself. Thirdly, online impulsive buying experiences were related to bundling products. For some women, it was a matter of principle to always buy more than one product at a time, adding also impulsive items to the order. Some women said that it would feel ‘odd’ if there was only one product in the virtual shopping cart. These types of impulsive purchases were considered also as rational to make – if shipping costs are per order, the more you buy, the better.

In conclusion, women’s impulsive buying can take many forms online, having both hedonic and utilitarian elements. Although buying physical products impulsively on the Internet might have its challenges due to issues of gratification and seduction, the results indicate that online impulsive buying can be an enjoyable and ordinary activity for women. However, this paper offers only a glimpse into experiences of online impulsive buying, and future research should address the phenomenon further e.g. with larger sample sizes, by comparing men to women, or by examining impulsive buying of downloadable, i.e. electronic products.

References

An Authenticity Typology: Consumer and Context
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Recent research suggests that authenticity adds to market value of both consumer products and cultural goods like music and tourism (Beverland, 2005; Holt, 2002). In addition, claims of authenticity are used to legitimize products and services to particular market segments sensitive to these issues (Kates, 2004; Penaloza, 2000). Authenticity is such an important concept that leading scholars in our field have recognized its importance and claim it as “one of the cornerstones of contemporary marketing” (Brown, Kozinets, & Sherry, 2003).

In a recent article on the topic, Beverland (2005) defines authenticity as “a story that balances industrial and rhetorical attributes to project sincerity through the avowal of commitments to traditions, passion for craft and production excellence, and the public disavowal
of the role of modern industrial attributes and commercial motivations”. The somewhat imprecise qualities of authenticity in the above definition fit well with the assertion by scholars that authenticity is created and which resides not in the product itself, but in the mind of the consumer (Belk & Costa, 1998; Holt, 1997; Peterson, 2005). Nearly every article on the subject highlights the consumer’s role in determining the verity of claims to authenticity. These range from cultural contexts as varied as music, film, art (Jones, 2005; Kozinets, 2001; Peterson, 2005), travel and tourism (Belk & Costa, 1998; Goulding, 2000; Grayson & Martinec, 2004), product oriented contexts like the luxury wine industry(Beverland, 2005), and branding issues in general(Brown, Kozinets, & Sherry, 2003; Holt, 2002; Kates, 2004). However, what is missing in this body of research is a typology outlining the definitions of the concept that exist in different marketplace contexts.

Using a grounded theory approach, I have conducted seven initial in-depth interviews to discover additional insight into the construct in an attempt to create this typology. The following example illustrates one respondent (an interior designer) who finds that the historical aspects of a product influences its authenticity:

“The Mies van der Rohe chair, it has a sort of look and feel to it, it’s like respect, I respect not only the designer, but the whole appearance, look and style that it represents.”

Mies van der Rohe died years ago, but the company still makes the chairs. Tell me about current furniture:

“Well, it’s a continuation of history. People like that style, that look, they associate it with history, they associate it with van der Rohe, a social aspect, there’s class associated with it.”

Tell me more about that:

“You have to appreciate style and architecture, I mean, it’s not for everyone.” (Female, age 42)

For this consumer, the fact that van der Rohe worked for the current manufacturer before his death and that they hold the license to produce the furniture are the crucial pieces in her authenticity equation. It also hints at an individuality theme as well.

The need for the consumer’s acceptance can force marketers to search for untraditional methods to claim authenticity. The direct method, (ie—“this is authentic”) is sometimes used, however a more subtle approach is often necessary to gain acceptance within culturally savvy segments of a consumer population. This brings me to the second part of the earlier definition—how authenticity as perceived by the consumer carries with it a disassociation with certain aspects of modernity, especially commercialization and profit motive. Things that are unique are seen as possessing “decommodified authenticity” (Holt, 1998). Thus marketers face an uphill battle with regard to assigning authenticity to commodified mass produced goods marketed as brands. One technique is to take steps to gain legitimacy with a subculture or community and create authenticity in that manner (Kates, 2004; Peterson, 2005). In this case, a product or brand works with or allies itself with members of a community through some action and becomes both “legitimate” and authentic in the process. An example is seen in Kate’s study of the gay community’s relations with the Levi Strauss company, headquartered in San Francisco, CA. In 1992, Levi Strauss was the first Fortune 500 company to offer domestic partner health benefits to its employees. Given the importance of this issue to the gay community, Kates documented how this and other actions by the company legitimized and lent authenticity to their products. (Kates, 2004) These actions immunize the brand from the anti-corporate attitudes and concern about profit motive aspects of authenticity mentioned above.

Holt touches on this point in an example from the travel and tourism industry where planned and packaged tours are held in low esteem by travelers seeking an authentic experience (Holt, 1998). In this context, individuality and uniqueness are the crucial things that constitute authenticity. In my study, one respondent discussed how she remembers travel through the purchase of souvenirs which appear to convey a sense of individuality through their authenticity.

“Anywhere I travel, I buy jewelry. So like, I ask those details, like I bought this ring in California that has turquoise on it, I got it at this particular place in San Diego, I met the girl who made it. When people ask me, they’ll say “Oh, that’s a pretty ring” and I’ll say yeah, I got it in California by this girl.”

But you could go to the mall to get things that would remind you of those places:

“Yeah, but that’s not as special, that’s more manufactured, there’s nothing that special in a thing I get at the mall. Now, if I went to Tiffany’s in New York and I got this ring, that’s different, because Tiffany’s isn’t everywhere, that to me would be like “what a cool experience.”

So it doesn’t necessarily have to be hand made:

“For the most part, it does. Tiffany’s is the exception.” (Female, age 25)

For this respondent, it is the unique exceptionality of the jewelry that is important, thus the context determines and changes the character of the authenticity concept in this person, even though the rationale (souvenir) and the product (jewelry) remains constant.

Throughout these interviews I have allowed subjects to lead me to context areas where authenticity has meaning to them. I have then explored the concept in those areas to find themes which emerge—the two reported above mirror those previously found in the literature. Others have reported unique conceptualizations that may find echoes as the study progresses. I hope to discover new consumer knowledge through this research as I conduct more interviews, relate it to theory, and share it through the working paper process.

References


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**The Morphing Self: Changing Identity as a Response to Self-Threats**

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Reminders of mortality are regularly flaunted in the media where consumers hear and read the death counts from events such as 9/11, the Tsunami, and Hurricane Katrina. Research on Terror Management Theory (TMT; e.g., Greenberg, Pyszczynski and Solomon 1986) that focuses on how people respond to death related information has shown that such information significantly influences individuals’ actions, thoughts and emotions. Consumer research has shown that when mortality salience (MS) is high individuals tend to over consume, engage in conspicuous consumption and risky behavior, and spend more money (e.g., Arndt et al. 2004; Bonsu and Belk 2003; Ferraro, Shiv, and Bettman 2005). While research to date provides insights into the impact of MS on product acquisition and consumption, it has not considered the possible implications of MS on the retention of possessions which consumers consider part of their extended self. Thus, in the present research we explore the possibility that in the face of an identity threat (i.e., MS is high), consumers will reconstruct their self identity (i.e., morph the self into a new recreated self) through the use of their possessions. Further, we test whether the tendency to morph the self through possessions when threatened will be moderated by two individual differences related to TMT: self-esteem and materialism.

The self is not permanently defined but rather it evolves and changes over time. Changes of the self occur naturally as a person moves from child- to adulthood, but also arise during stressful life events such as death, divorce, and loss of employment. This process of identity reconstruction is described by the concept of rites of passage (van Gennep 1960) consisting of separation (i.e., disentanglement from a social role or status), transition (i.e., adaptation and change to fit a new role), and incorporation (i.e., integration of the self with the new role). One way in which individuals may shape their new identities is by the products they consume (e.g., Pavia and Mason 2004; Price, Arnould, and Curasi 2000) as according to Belk (1988) possessions, by representing memories and feelings that link people with their historical identity, are important as means of expressing a person’s self. For example, following a divorce a woman might dispose of a once sacred Mickey Mouse watch that was related to a fun/dependent self identity in exchange for a new Rolex that conveys a new identity as a strong, independent woman. In the present research we predict that when people are exposed to a MS threat they will attempt to redefine the self through the possessions they consider a part of their immediate identity. They will do this by both distancing the self from old possessions once considered a central part of their identity and drawing possessions once considered to be an extraneous component of the self closer.

Following TMT we expect that this effect will be moderated by self-esteem and materialism. First, according to TMT, high self-esteem individuals are able to protect their evaluations of themselves as their self-esteem can serve as a buffer against self-threatening information (Harmon-Jones et al. 1997). Thus, we expect that low self-esteem individuals will have a stronger tendency to morph the self in the presence of a MS threat compared to consumers with high self-esteem. Second, TMT predicts that MS should lead to increased efforts to live up to the standards of value from which self-esteem is derived. High material values are defined as the use of possessions to judge...
the success of others and oneself, the centrality of possessions in a person’s life, and the belief that possessions and their acquisition lead to happiness and life satisfaction (Richins and Dawson 1992). Given this we expect that people high in materialism should be more likely to redefine their self-concept by shifting possessions when MS is high, whereas tendencies to redefine the self through possessions are not expected to differ for those low in materialism regardless of whether a threat is present or not..

One study was conducted to explore the notion of the morphing self. The study was administered in two parts, one week apart. During the first session participants either completed the MS or control topic manipulations following previous research (e.g. Goldenberg et al. 2005) and the PANAS scale (Watson et al. 1988). After completing a distracter task they were given a piece of paper on which eight nested circles were printed, the innermost circle labeled “SELF” and subsequent rings labeled “A” to “H” described as elements in a participant’s life ranging from “very closely related to your self” to “not at all related to your self”. Participants were asked to place as many possessions as they could think of into the drawing, taking into account how closely related to their self they considered the possession. The dependent variable was the distances between the center of the circle and the cross that marked the placement of each of the possessions. Finally participants completed a self-esteem scale (Rosenberg 1965) and the material values scale (Richins and Dawson 1992). During the second session, participants completed the manipulation they were not assigned to during the first session and then again completed the PANAS scale, distracter task and dependent measure (i.e., circle task).

Results revealed that when participants faced a MS threat, they placed possessions they considered as being closely related to their selves further away from the self. In contrast, possessions that under the control condition were placed far away from the self were placed significantly closer to their self in the threat condition. As expected these effects were qualified by individual difference measures for self-esteem and material values. Participants who were both low in self-esteem and high in materialism used possessions to a greater extent to redefine their self-concept when MS was high (as compared to absent).

A second study is currently conducted in which the effect of non-mortality related threats on consumers’ tendency to use possessions to redefine their selves is examined. Preliminary analyses indicate that consumers morph their self as a response to a variety of threats to their self.

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SESSION SUMMARY

The title for this special session was inspired by the recent movie “The Devil Wears Prada”, which narrates the misadventures of young university graduate Andy Sachs who obtains a job as assistant to powerful fashion magazine editor Miranda Priestly. This movie is of special interest for the ACR community as in one of its most dramatic scenes Miranda—whose character is inspired by Vogue America’s editor-in-chief Anna Wintour—denies the idea of consumer agency. In the scene, Miranda and some of her assistants are deciding between two similar belts for an outfit and Andy, who got a job “a thousand girls would kill for” despite not being a fashionista, sniggers because, in her opinion, they are almost identical. Here is Miranda’s reaction.

Miranda Priestly: Something funny?
Andy Sachs: No, no, nothing. Y’know, it’s just that both those belts look exactly the same to me. Y’know, I’m still learning about all this stuff.

Miranda Priestly: This... ‘stuff’? Oh... ok. I see, you think this has nothing to do with you. You go to your closet and you select out, oh I don’t know, that lumpy blue sweater, for instance, because you’re trying to tell the world that you take yourself too seriously to care about what you put on your back. But what you don’t know is that that sweater is not just blue, it’s not turquoise... it’s actually cerulean. You’re also blindly unaware of the fact that in 2002, Oscar De La Renta did a collection of cerulean gowns. And then I think it was Yves St Laurent, wasn’t it, who showed cerulean military jackets? And then cerulean quickly showed up in the collections of 8 different designers. Then it filtered down through the department stores and then trickled on down into some tragic casual corner where you, no doubt, fished it out of some clearance bin. However, that blue represents millions of dollars and countless jobs and so it’s sort of comical how you think that you’ve made a choice that exempts you from the fashion industry when, in fact, you’re wearing the sweater that was selected for you by the people in this room. From a pile of stuff.

In this scene, we can perceive echoes of one of the central debates in social theory: are individuals autonomous in their thoughts and behaviors, or are there deeper forces that influence how they think and behave? Here, Miranda acts as a spokesperson for a strong structuralist position. In her view, fashion institutions shape the actions of individuals, even those who, like Andrea, believe not to be influenced by fashion. The agency vs. structure debate is of central interest also for consumer culture theory (Arnould & Thompson, 2005) where a variety of studies has on the one hand represented consumers as autonomous, interpretive agents who do not always passively accept the influence of marketers over their life while, on the other hand, other research has illuminated the institutional and social structures that systematically influence consumption. We however note the dearth of research that analyzes the interplay between consumer and marketing practices. We thus concur with Peñaloza (2001: p. 394) that “in carving out the study of consumer behavior as a separate field of inquiry independent of marketing activities, consumer researchers may be losing sight of the ways in which consumers and marketers negotiate cultural meanings in relation to each other in the marketplace”. Putting marketing back in the picture, in our view, is key to an improved understanding of consumer culture.

When speaking of fashion, these same remarks apply. While a few studies have investigated agency vs. structure in the consumption of fashion (Thompson & Haykto, 1997; Murray, 2002), the joint investigation of consumers, marketers and the media as they negotiate cultural meanings is still in an embryonic state. The goal of this special session was to introduce new research findings that improve our understanding of how consumption of fashion is influenced—sometimes in invisible ways—by marketplace actors. All the papers in this session analyze the construction of fashion in two different moments of cultural production: marketplace discourse and everyday consumption. The papers draw on a variety of disciplinary and methodological approaches that should appeal to a broad audience interested both in fashion and, more in general, to institutional constraints to consumer choices and to consumer constraints to marketer choices. More in detail:

Søren Askegaard, Deniz Atik and Stefania Borghini introduce the session with a study on consumer desires and fashion based on interviews with both fashion consumers and designers. Intriguingly, they found not only that the fashion systems constrains consumers as the meaning of fashion-related choices is continuously resignedified, but also that consumers pose constraints on marketers, increasingly frustrated by the need to keep up with increasingly changing consumer tastes.

In the second paper, Diego Rinallo investigates the emergence of the metrosexual—a straight men adopting the aesthetic sensibilities of gay consumers—and compares this media representation of masculinity with the lived experiences of male consumers. He found that the consumption space of straight men is made of ‘danger zone’ and ‘safe areas’ whose boundaries are continuously renegotiated by marketers, the media, individual consumers and the ‘panoptical’ gaze of their significant others.

The third paper, presented by Susan Kaiser, Janet Hethorn, Ryan Looyseen, and Daniel Claro, addresses the interplay between prescription and description in men’s fashion, through a longitudinal critical discourse of men’s magazines which is compared with consumer data based on interviews and a survey. The study on which this paper is based draws on an ongoing multi-year study. Extensive interpretations and write-ups for the findings here reported are however complete.

Also the final paper looks into the world of men’s fashion with a quantitative study that employs a web-based methodology for visual research to empirically identify the ways through which consumers and cultural gatekeepers (i.e., people working for various fashion institutions) categorize men’s “looks”. Data collection and analysis is complete for consumer data, but still underway for gatekeeper data. For the presentation, initial results from the comparison will however be provided.
**ABSTRACTS**

“The Interplay of Institutional Forces and Consumer Desires in the Moulding of Fashion”

Søren Askegaard, University of Southern Denmark
Deniz Atik, Izmir University of Economics
Stefania Borghini, Bocconi University

Recently, the Consumer Culture Theory (Arnould & Thompson, 2005) has witnessed a debate concerning the structure-agency relationship in the fashion process. One major contribution in the *Journal of Consumer Research* has focused on the central role of consumer agency in the meaning transfer process from fashion industry to consumers (Thompson & Haytko 1997), stressing the interaction between consumers’ private life worlds, schemes of meanings and fashion practices and the symbolic material provided by the fashion industry. In a re-inquiry of the Thompson and Haytko study, Murray (2002) both confirmed the importance of consumer agency but also drew attention to the relative neglect of hegemonic pressure that the fashion system and its marketing practices exercises over consumers in the former study. This paper represents an attempt to throw additional light on the particular systemic nature of the fashion process. We would like, however, to go beyond the above mentioned structure-agency perspective and apply what we, in lack of better terms, could call a Baudrillard-inspired institutional perspective on the fashion system as an interagency between industrial and consumer agents (Kozinets *et al.*, 2004). Our efforts hereby also represent an attempt to respond to Arnould and Thompsons (2005) call for more focus in consumer research on institutional agents that have shaped the marketplace and the consumer as social categories.

Belk, Ger & Askegaard (2003) suggested that consumer desires are socially constructed in a nexus between consumer fantasies and social institutional forces. Our study tries to investigate this nexus from two different perspectives, building on a set of interviews with agents from the fashion industry as well as fashion consumers. Baudrillard (1970) analyzed consumer society in terms of a code, or a system of codes organizing what he saw as a contemporary morality of stylizations, of differentiation, of excess and of waste in a modern consumer society. The prototype of such a codified system, he argued, was the fashion system. Fashion, on the level of experienced consumption a system of endless variations, renewals and differentiations, is on the systemic level a powerful political force exercising its hegemony over consumer practices. However, as we would like to argue here and as Baudrillard hints at in various parts of his essay, not only the consumers but also the producers are victims of this code. The seducer is the first to be seduced by the seduction mechanisms, as Baudrillard (1979) was later to write. This was the perspective that we set out to explore in this study—whether by investigating market agents in the fashion system—consumers and producers alike—we would be able to say something about the fashion system as a code in a Baudrillardian sense, whose effects goes beyond a more traditional understanding of market politics, as expressed in Murray (2002).

When the construct under investigation is a passionate feeling such as consumer desire, qualitative methods were most suitable for data collection, conducting in-depth interviews that could provide a greater breath of data than any structured interview or questionnaire where the responses are more limited to the specific questions (Fontana and Frey 2000). In the Spring of 2005, in Milan, Italy, we interviewed a total of 29 fashion market agents, 15 fashion consumers and 14 people with various influential positions as designers within the fashion industry. On the consumer side, we focused on women’s fashion as fashion in clothing in the modern world has been mainly concerned with women (Davis 1992). For instance, fashion magazines still show many more pictures of women than men (Barnard 2002). On the producer side, the main category chosen was the fashion designers who have experience on women’s fashion design, aiming to develop a deeper understanding of their vision of fashion, their perceptions of consumer desires, how/if they can anticipate, construct, or even change consumer desires, which challenges they are facing within the fashion system, and where they get their inspirations for new designs.

Our results indicate, that seen from the individual agent’s perspective, the fashion system does indeed have the character of a code that lives a life seemingly (but of course not really) independent of the individual agents in the fashion system. Our consumers are fashion-lovers who spend a great deal of time following trends, checking new styles etc. Indeed, the shifting character is the basis for the allure of the fashion market and its offerings of sources of active consumers’ playful activities concerning styles and self. Nevertheless, they do also feel some kind of frustration over the volatility of the fashion market. Since their identity-formation is dependent on the fashion-market, the degree of non-control that consumers feel over this part of their identity does seem to lead to a sort of doppelgänger personal image (Thompson, Rindfleisch & Arsel 2006), since the consumer feels a lack of control over a significant part of the sign system used to express the self. Our fashion designers and other industry-representing informants, on the other hand, express a similar frustration over the difficulty of keeping up with what is perceived as an ever-increasing velocity of the fashion market change coupled with increasing unpredictable consumer trends and tastes. In other words, fashion designers feel as much trapped in the contemporary fashion system as the consumers, but seen from the opposite perspective.

Our study expands on the insights provided by Miller (2004) that contemporary fashion market freedom leads to a certain structural conservatism, since the freedom experienced by consumers as well as producers constitutes a market system not so much characterized by a universe of unlimited choice but rather by mutual surveillance. Finally, our findings represent a refinement of the conclusions concerning the politics of fashion made by Murray (2002), as well as a first glimpse into the lived experience of market agents operating under the fashion system as a seemingly independent code.

“Producing and Consuming the Metrosexual”

Diego Rinallo, Bocconi University

For years, when targeting men, marketers have produced representation of male beauty and appearance shaped by gay aesthetics. This paper examines recent developments in the marketplace discourse around masculinity centered upon the so-called “metrosexuals” (male consumers living in/near metropolitan areas who adopt the aesthetic sensibility often associated with gay men) (Simpson, 2002) and contrasts them with the lived experience of fashion-conscious straight men in Italy.

Fashionable representations of masculinities face centuries-old cultural taboos (Craig, 1994). The idea of fashion-unconscious men may be traced back to early fashion theorists who observed the diffusion, in the decades following the French Revolution, of the so-called “Great Masculine Renunciation” (Flugel, 1930), i.e. the principle that men—unlike women—should not call attention to themselves as objects of beauty. In recent years, however, mass-media representation of masculinity have fostered a renegotiation of gender boundaries (Patterson & Elliott, 2002). In the 1980s, men’s lifestyle magazines represented a “new man” more in touch with his feminine side and not afraid of caring about his physical
aspect (Nixon, 1996). In the 1990s, magazines proposed the less feminine and soft ‘new lad’ (Crewe, 2003). In the first years of the new millennium, history repeated itself with the media hype surrounding “metrosexuals”. While coined by journalist Marc Simpson (1994; 2002), the term was appropriated by multinational advertising agency Euro RSCG who issued in June 2003 a research report that represented metrosexuals as a viable market segment. While in Simpson’s writings the sexual orientation of metrosexuals is immaterial, Euro RSCG’s (2003) report and the subsequent media hype have constructed metrosexuals as straight men. Sustained by Euro RSCG’s publicity and the media craze surrounding it, metrosexuality enjoyed substantial worldwide visibility. After a couple of years of undisputed attention, however, the metrosexual was deposed by his self-nominated successor, the übersonal, i.e. a man who is “supremely confident (without being obnoxious), masculine, stylish, and committed to unpromising quality in all areas of life” (Salzman et al., 2005, p. 76). Similarly to what happened when the “new lad” substituted the softer “new man”, here again the metrosexual was substituted by the tougher–but equally style-addict–übersonal. And again, marketplace actors remain behind the media halo surrounding the latest fashionable representation of masculinity: Ms. Salzman and her co-authors are all involved in the advertising business at multinational agencies that investigated trends in consumer society to better serve their corporate customers.

When we move through the circuit of culture from mass media representations of masculinities to the consumption practices of real men, the developments here described look problematic. While reassured by marketers of the manly nature of, say, wearing pink shirts, shaving their bodies or going to spas, straight men still have to face centuries-old prejudices against these consumption practices. To address this issue, I generated textual data from 14 straight men aged 20 to 38 through long, phenomenological interviews. My informants highlighted the clear existence of do’s and don’ts when speaking of fashion and physical appearance. The interpretive model in Figure 1 makes sense of the imagined barriers that straight men dare not cross and the mechanisms that enforce respect of these barriers.

For straight men, the consumption of fashion is made of safe areas–where the imitation of fashion models may occur in security–and of danger zones–where consumption is riskier as regimes of surveillance (Schroeder & Zwick, 2005) sanction illegitimate consumption as our appearance is subjected to the approval of significant others such as parents, partners, friends, acquaintances, coworkers and superiors. Consumption practices may be stigmatized for being untidy, sloppy, not refined, old-fashioned. Other practices may on the other hand be too refined or fashionable, to the point of being gender-inappropriate for men. Only in safe areas the panoptical gaze of significant others is avoided and consumers may feel free to indulge in consumption activities that will help them to look similar to the models depicted in fashion advertising.

Far from being fixed, however, the symbolic boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate consumption are constantly renegotiated by marketers, the media, individual consumers and their significant others. The lower bound of the “safe area” (see again Figure 1) is rarely questioned: a minimum level of tidiness and aesthetic sense is taken for granted. The prominence of fashionable masculinities in mass culture induces however consumers to continuously renegotiate the legitimacy of consumption goods and practices beyond the upper bound. These “imagined” barriers are permeable and consumers often notice that practices which are fairly common today were unconceivable for men when their fathers were their age (e.g., pink shirts) or even a few years ago (e.g., shaving one’s body, plucking one’s eyebrows). Most consumers engage in boundary work, i.e. the renegotiation of the male identity

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**FIGURE 1**
The cultural production of straight men’s consumptionscape
to include certain forms of consumption in terms of product categories, product attributes, price levels, distribution channels. Thus, for example a cheap moisturizing cream bought in a supermarket may be less ‘threatening’ than an expensive, top brand one bought in a cosmetics shop; an anti-wrinkle cream may be redefined as ‘regenerating’ and its use linked to special circumstances (“I wouldn’t buy it, but my skin need being fresh for tomorrow’s meeting with my boss”); etc. Lack of legitimacy may thus regard not only products and brand, but also their distribution channels, price levels and modes of consumption.

“Masculine Fashion: Prescription and Description”
Susan Kaiser, University of California, Davis
Janet Hethorn, University of Delaware
Ryan Loosyen, University of California, Davis
Daniel Claro, University of Delaware

This paper addresses the complex interplay between prescription and description in social constructions of masculine fashion. In the definitional sense, the similarities between the verbs “prescribe” and “describe” lie in their shared root word (“scribe”), from the Latin scribe (to write, to compose). The verb “scribe” also has an historical connotation of cutting or scratching in order to mark or to make a text—presumably or most commonly, a written or verbal text that enters cultural discourse. Visual texts such as appearance style also enter cultural discourse; indeed, “text” is the root word of textiles (the materials of clothing). Here, we conduct a critical analysis of institutional (magazine) and individual (consumer) written discourse that refers to and interacts with visual discourse.

We focus on “masculine fashion,” in part because it constitutes an oxymoron of sorts, to the extent that fashion has been gendered as feminine in modern western culture. “Masculine fashion” embodies the contradictory or ambivalent nature of (a) sustaining institutionalized power through business suits or dress codes, and (b) making (writing, cutting material) change as required to sell new clothes or to represent emerging identities.

The diverse and overlapping meanings between prescription and description are instructive for understanding change and continuity in masculine clothing and appearance styles. We use “prescription” to mean “the action of laying down authoritative rules or directions” regarding what to wear, and “description” to mean “a discourse intended to give a mental image” of clothing and appearance style (Webster’s Dictionary). Using a grounded theory approach, we analyzed (a) Esquire magazine archives and (b) contemporary consumers’ descriptions of masculine style.

The historical discourse analysis of Esquire followed an exploration of diverse contemporary men’s fashion magazines (e.g., Details, GQ, and a variety of alternative or subcultural magazines). We became intrigued with what we saw as a prevalent prescriptive tone in these publications, and then decided to pursue a more in-depth, historical analysis of one publication. Esquire was selected because it is the oldest U.S. men’s magazine (founded in 1933) featuring masculine fashion. An extensive discourse analysis across Esquire’s years of publication revealed a close connection between prescription and description. Frequently, that is, the magazine issues prescribing what men should wear in order to be considered modern and appropriate also described in detail the clothes involved. It became apparent that prescription necessitates rather “thick” description; prescription does not assume substantial prior knowledge regarding style and fashion on the part of the reader, who presumably “needs to be told” exactly what to wear and how. A different pattern was found in magazine issues that were less prescriptive; there was also less detail in the clothing descriptions.

There seemed to be more of an editorial assumption that the reader had some knowledge of style and fashion. So, prescription and description generally occurred together (e.g., in the 1930s, the 1980s, and the early 2000s). An exception to this rule was in the 1970s, when there was a high degree of description (e.g., fiber content, color, cut) but little prescription (in a time of a “do your own thing” discourse). Otherwise, there was a general historical pattern of an “ebb and flow,” or a rather pendular swing, between an editorial tone that was prescriptive (telling the reader what to do with the descriptive information) and what we call “assumptive” (assuming the reader already had the knowledge and needed less descriptive information). The latter tone uses “could” rather than “should” statements.

The contemporary consumer study used our “describe what you see” (DWYS) method (see Figure 2). This method elicits open-ended responses from consumers, to determine how words are used to describe images, so as to communicate shared meaning, to frame visual expectations, and to set up categories of visual meaning. We collected responses from approximately 300 students in two large, mixed gender classes at two different universities on the east and west coasts of the U.S. They wrote descriptions, in 30-second intervals, of a series of 15 diverse masculine images, derived from magazines as well as an original photographic documentation (generated by the second author) of diverse masculine styles from various locations of the U.S. and Europe. The open-ended responses generally fell into the following themes, emerging from the inductive discourse analysis: (a) value judgment, (b) action, (c) focus on visual structure/elements, (d) label or type of person, and (e) assumed intent or thinking of the observed male.

In the conclusion of this presentation, we observe that, despite differences in visual presentation, intentionalty, and level and type of detail, there are some intriguing parallels between the magazine and consumer discourses, especially in the realm of assumptive thinking. We present a theoretical model that uses concepts of prescription and description as criteria to analyze the circumstances and contexts surrounding meanings of masculine fashion. We discuss the implications of this model for future consumer research and suggest some strategies for re-thinking “masculine fashion” in relation to gendered ways of visually knowing identity and difference.

“Is Beauty in the Eye of the Encoder or the Decoder? A Typology of Male Looks as Perceived by American Men”
Wi-Suk Kwon, Auburn University
Michael Solomon, Saint Joseph’s University
Basil Englis, Berry College

Despite the fact that menswear accounts for slightly more than one third of U.S. apparel purchases, little research has been conducted to understand how men perceive and respond to the repertoire of “looks” the apparel industry proposes at any point in time (Hampp, 2006). The problem is twofold: (1) The framework for understanding apparel consumption is still based upon a female-dominant model, i.e., “fashion” has been equated with femininity; and (2) there is an ongoing belief that women make or at least strongly influence the majority of menswear purchases. As the distinctions between “masculine” and “feminine” gender-role appropriate behavior increasingly blur, however, the dynamic around men’s clothing purchases is shifting. Men are assuming increasing responsibility for their own clothing purchases and exhibiting increased interest in the niceties of clothing and personal care products (Hampp, 2006). Therefore, academicians and menswear industry practitioners need to better understand the nature of this behavioral shift and its possible impact on the way the industry
approaches male fashion consumers. One element in the successful positioning of apparel products is to pair a particular apparel style with a particular male “look.” While some previous research has been directed at identifying a typology of female looks commonly found in print and other advertising, there is no similar work that addresses male looks (Ashmore et al., 1996; Englis et al., 1996). The research we report here involves empirically identifying a typology of current male “looks” that men perceive. In the next stage of the research, we will compare the perceptions of these decoders with those of the encoders of these looks (editors of men’s fashion magazine, stylists, designers and other “cultural gatekeepers”).

A key assumption of this work is that both industry practitioners and consumers simplify their social worlds by mentally categorizing objects in the environment (Barsalou, 1990) through a process of cognitive prototyping (Solomon & Buchanan, 1991). A crucial question is: To what extent do the cognitive prototypes industry gatekeepers use match those of the consumers to whom they market their products? Our goal is to generate insight into the structure and meanings of the male look categories industry practitioners currently use and to compare these with consumer perceptions. By better understanding and comparing the criteria they use to mentally classify male looks, this study can provide insight into how menswear fashion styles are organized in the minds of encoders and decoders of menswear fashion. These results will facilitate an understanding of the process of social stereotyping and how style configurations (or “product constellations”) influence these perceptual dynamics. And, as one practical ramification of this comparison process, we will identify gaps between these perceptions that may in turn generate dissatisfaction among consumers with available market offerings.

Building upon a methodology previously developed by Solomon and Englis (Ashmore et al., 1996; Englis et al., 1996) to study a typology of female beauty, respondents will be given a sample of images of male looks. They will then sort the images according to their perceived similarities and differences. The image stimuli used for the Q-Sort will be randomly selected from a visual database we have compiled; this consists of male model shots collected from online model portfolios of five U.S. modeling agencies. Among over 1,000 model images available from the portfolios, those featuring only one model, showing his entire body fully-clothed in a standing posture were considered for inclusion in this study. After the Q-Sort, the respondents will be asked to label the categories they created and to provide a narrative description of the characteristics of the male looks they grouped in each category. This task will be followed by evaluations of the categories in a structured form using various rating scales that address attributes of each look; these include appropriate/inappropriate usage situations (e.g., work, dating) and estimated user profiles such as personal characteristics (e.g., innovativeness), professions (e.g., blue collar, white collar), and fashionability (e.g., fashion opinion leadership). We will develop the structured questionnaire items based upon
findings from a content analysis of preliminary focus group interviews we have already conducted to explore consumers’ perceptions of male looks as well as a review of relevant literature.

We will collect data online by adapting software the authors have previously created that permits on-screen manipulation and data capture to conduct Q-Sorts (Englis & Solomon, 2004). This technology permits the respondent to set the number of categories and to adjust these as he sorts the images. When the respondent is satisfied with the categories that he has created and has sorted all of the images, he selects a prototypic image to represent each category. The respondent’s best exemplar for each category (as well as access to all category images) is then presented along with the open-ended and structured items that ask the respondent to describe the meaning of the category he has created. We will recruit a national sample of U.S. male consumers for the study.

By analyzing and comparing cognitive categories of male looks and the labels men use to describe these looks, we hope to identify attributes of menswear (e.g., styles, colors, items) as well as physical features of the male models (body type, hair color, facial features, etc.) that play a significant role in defining specific male “looks.” Through these analyses, we hope to provide the menswear industry with insight into possible cognitive discrepancies between the industry and male consumers in terms of their interpretations of male looks. In so doing, we expect that our findings will help identify future market opportunities for the menswear industry, as well as offer recommendations for their communication strategies.

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SESSION OVERVIEW

Consumers go through major transitions following anticipated life stages (e.g., adolescence, parenthood, retirement) and unexpected life events (e.g., divorce, death, disability). During such transitions, people experience an extended period of disruption in which they re-examine their self-definition, form new social networks, and adapt behaviors. Ascribed roles, responsibilities, and relationships are all re-negotiated during this transition which “...results in a change in one’s assumptions about one’s self and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one’s behavior and relationships” (Schlossberg 1981, p. 5). Consumer behaviors are an integral part of this change (Andreasen 1984; Gentry et al. 1995; Mason and Pavia 2006; Pavia and Mason 2004). Shifts occur in the products/services that are consumed, the location of the consumption, and in the lifestyle practices that are adopted or ended. Such changes reflect new normative reference groups and consumer social networks. Consumers also note changed experiences of the marketplace which act to reflexively uncover and coalesce the emergent identity. The interplay of the transitioning consumer with the market reinforces the sense of where he or she “belongs” or “doesn’t belong” and the products that are designed for “people like me” or for “everyone but me”. This session focused on situations in which the consumer’s sense of isolation is increased through market interactions.

Consumers who do not fit widely accepted social norms inherent in the marketplace may either self-identify, or be denoted by society, as other. For example, adolescents are commonly assumed to have family ties that will offer some socialization and financial support as they transition into independent adult consumers. If no such familial resources are available, prematurely emancipated adolescents encounter significant challenges in attaining many essential goods and services (e.g., rental agreements, healthcare, credit). Such teens are marked as suspiciously deficient, either flawed themselves, or alarmingly close to dysfunctional adults. In the case of new parenthood, the consumer is commonly portrayed as an upper middle-class, adult female with a healthy, happy, thriving child. Parenthood alone brings transition, but stereotypical parents are generally not shunned as other. However, parents with children who look or behave differently from expectations, or parents who look or behave differently themselves, may trigger fear or aversion in public, leading to additional exclusion and isolation.

The session examined the experiences of individuals who, while navigating new consumer roles and responsibilities, also experience exclusion resulting from preconceived marketplace norms. Using ethnographic and interview methods, the three papers explored the obstacles, limitations, and stigma faced in marketplace consumption and social encounters. Specifically, the presenters investigated 1) specific mechanisms of exclusion, 2) how consumers adapt to being denoted as other, 3) how consumers resist this demarcation, and 4) the market structures illuminated by these experiences of exclusion. Drawing from theory in stigma, shame, the oppressive gaze, life course transitions, family studies, coping and adaptation, the papers demonstrated that these consumers creatively redefine production and consumption activities to fulfill their new consumer roles and establish their emerging identity. Further, exploring marketplace boundaries/normative behavior demonstrates beliefs that are so deeply ingrained that they are accepted without question. This, in turn, allows consumer researchers to identify new marketplace borders that evolve from the resistance of consumer denoted as other.

ABSTRACTS

“Care-Leavers’ Transitions to Independent Living”

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Young people’s transitions to independent living introduce them to new consumer roles and require adaptation to the social processes, contexts, and power relations that characterize marketplaces and consumption spaces (Morrow and Richards 1996). Consumer researchers have examined aspects of transition to adulthood (e.g. Carlson and Tanner, 2006; Moore et al., 2002) but under the assumption that adolescents are undergoing ‘normal’ processes of change, expected at their stage in life, and are ‘normal’ young people embedded in ‘normal’ families with enduring relationships with family and peers. People who have grown up in care, typically transition to independent living prematurely and abruptly. Their ‘fast track’ transitions to adulthood and care leaver status expose them to stigmatization by others and the transition process is typically experienced against the backdrop of a volatile social network/family context that provides little preparation and support as they adapt to new roles and responsibilities. This paper examines how these three factors characterize young care leavers’ transitions to independent living. It explores their experiences of performing new roles in household production and consumption, of stigmatization and the coping and resistance strategies that they engage to adapt to their new roles and identities.

Most life transitions are ‘on-time’ and ‘in-sequence’, causing no major disruption to personal lives and social structures (George, 1993). Non-normative transitions tend to be more disorderly and stressful for individuals and families, who may be ill-prepared for their new roles, enter them reluctantly and whose circumstances are incompatible with the social structures that typically support the transition (Hagestad and Neugarten, 1985). Heterogeneous social contexts affect role allocation and socialization (Gentry, 1997; Granovetter, 1985) such that ‘off-time’ and ‘out of sequence’ transitions are not necessarily determinant of performance in new roles. However, a social context featuring strong and weak social ties that offer only limited socialization and support, and which may be further disrupted during transition, can exacerbate the stress of non-normative transitions. Whereas some care experienced young people have social networks that are supportive and stable, many encounter inadequacies in state care that result in poor-quality caregivers and constant shifts of placement, careers, schools and co-workers that inhibits stable relationships with professionals, disrupts contact with parents, siblings, family and friends (Ridge

Fast track transitions are characterized by leaving education at or before the minimum age and risking unemployment or insecure and badly-paid work; may involve early family formation and a greater risk of involvement in problematic social behavior including criminal offending, abuse of drugs and alcohol, and under age sex.

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and Millar, 2000). This dislocated social world inhibits consumer socialization during childhood and results in lack of support during the accelerated transition to adult life.

Furthermore, recent social work literature indicates that most care leavers expect to experience prejudice due to their care status during their adult life (Cathcart, 2004). A person’s care leaver status is only revealed, and risks being a source of stigma, in certain contexts. However, young care leavers also face the alternative or coinciding stigma of being a young person who has made a ‘fast track’ transition to adulthood. Fast track transitions break the normative process for transition to adulthood (George, 1993; Gilles, 2000; Molgat, 2002); stigma are attached to young people who live independently but are not able to be self-supporting and whose behaviour breaks social rules around being a socially responsible adult.

We adopt a qualitative methodology to explore care leavers’ experiences of adapting to new consumer roles, responsibilities and identities faced with inexperience, lack of socialization for, and social support during the transition alongside the added burden of stigmatization, which is exacerbated with ambiguity about what information is held on them and its effect on the discourse and power relations as they perform consumer roles. We consulted extensively with governmental and non-profit organizations that support young people in the transition to independent living and used a combination of single-sex focus groups and in-depth interviews with sixteen participants aged 16 to 21 years lasting between 1 and 1.5 hours. Some of the focus group participants were also interviewed to obtain deeper insights into their experiences.

The stories related by the young people revealed that their early transitions to independent living sometimes resulted in clashes between identity orientations. Hedonic and illicit consumption activities (incl. drug taking, drinking and sexual activity), driven by peer influences, jarred with expectations of them as socially responsible adults and were potentially more hazardous for their well being because they generally lacked the cushion of financial and emotional support (either through lack of contact or lack of resources) from strong social ties. Although some emotional coping (e.g. denial) was deployed when faced with the challenge of new household production and consumption roles, many care leavers demonstrate proactive adaptation and active resistance to marketplace practices that discriminate against them or impeded their ability to meet their needs. This was most widely evidenced in relation to goods and services required to meet basic needs (e.g. housing), but was more broadly used by those individuals with a strong sense of control. Experiences of stigma were reflected in complaints of being treated unfairly, insensitively or discourteously, of being denied full information, access, choice and the right to redress and of intrusiveness by service providers. Stigma management was an important dimension of coping, to improve the power balance in marketplace interactions and engender greater empathy from service staff. Nowhere was this more evident than in public sector contexts (e.g. dealing with local government welfare and housing offices) where, despite the rhetoric of customer service, frontline staff often discriminate in service provision and marginalize weaker consumer segments. Inter and intra-individual differences were observed in approaches to stigma management; alliance to others who did not possess the stigma and signifying contradictions to the stigma (through clothing, language, behavior) were common approaches for those who sought to actively manage stigmatization in consumer encounters. The research contributes to the growing body of research into emerging adulthood (e.g. Arnett 2000; Hagan and Foster 2003) that has been criticized for focusing on college students and neglecting more disadvantaged segments.

It builds on scholarship on consumer transitions (Schouten 1991), consumer disadvantage (Hill, 2002) and stigmatization (Adkins and Ozanne, 2005) and selfhood and identity (Hirschman and Hill, 2000).

“The Vulnerability of Single Fathers Adjusting to Their New Parental Role”

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Consumers going through role transitions face relatively high degrees of uncertainty during the liminal stage. Post-transition, when they have acclimated to their new conditions, their vulnerability diminishes tremendously. However, during the transition their vulnerability may be quite extreme. This paper deals with single fathers’ transition from somewhat uninvolved fathers to very involved parents, facing aspects of a marketing interface that tend to make the transition more difficult.

While we are among the first to study single fathers within consumer research, they have been studied for over three decades in Sociology. In fact, two decades ago, Thompson (1986, pp. 83-84) summarized the findings from previous studies as providing the following patterns:

These interview studies of single fathers characterized the first year of transition as being especially stressful, with fathers required to negotiate personal problems (loneliness, depression) as well as the reorganization of the household. … While some managed to modify their working hours and responsibilities, others suffered financial difficulties from reducing their work hours or, in a few cases, quitting work altogether to become full-time caregivers. Following this initial period, however, these studies almost uniformly reported that fathers felt increasingly competent and successful in their new domestic responsibilities. Very few fathers employed housekeepers or babysitters; most assumed cooking, cleaning, and caregiving demands by themselves, and most reported enjoying, to some extent, these new obligations. … To be sure, some fathers voiced concern over their ability to provide for the child’s ‘emotional needs’ (e.g., nurturance), and the fathers of daughters were concerned with the child’s sexuality and the lack of an appropriate female role model at home, especially as girls reached puberty. On the whole, fathers reported substantial satisfaction with their adjustment to single fathering. … By and large, they had little preparation for assuming domestic and child-care responsibilities.

The stories told by our single-father informants resonated strongly with this general pattern. We found, like Risman (1987) and others, that fathers can “mother” well. However, the summary does not describe sufficiently the difficult transition period that fathers endured. Becoming “effective involved parents” occurred somewhat slowly and required the acquisition of new household production and consumption processes on the part of the family. Further, the father’s masculine identity faced major changes; Coltrane (1989, p. 453) noted “traditional tasks of fatherhood are limited to begetting, protecting, and providing for children. While fathers typical derive a gendered sense of self from these activities, their masculinity is even more dependent on not doing the things that mothers do.”

Our informants, like most of the fathers described in Lareau (2000), saw themselves as being involved in their children’s lives prior to becoming a single father, but realized that the level of involvement was very limited once they had reached some sort of equilibrium as single fathers. Lareau (2000, p. 417) found fathers to be “helpers of mothers,” recruited, directed, and monitored by mothers, with their family contributions consisting of “hanging
out,” laughter, transmission of life skills, and conversational dominance. Very few fathers, including our informants, had full time responsibility for their children prior to becoming single fathers. Our study focused on this transition and, specifically, on the role of household production and consumption challenges that must be dealt with during the transition. We found that being stigmatized as “other” made it more difficult to grapple with the gender identity changes required to move single fathers toward “mothering,” and much stigmatization was perceived to be present in media presentations of fathers.

“What’s the Matter with that Kid? Family Consumption Strategies that Minimize the Critical” Marlys J. Mason, Oklahoma State University Teresa Pavia, University of Utah

One of the metanarratives of most contemporary consumer theories is that chronic illness or disability is an unfortunate side note, when in reality, impairment, physical differences, and cognitive limitations touch many consumers’ lives. Other disciplines have a richer history in addressing difference and disability such as disability studies, sociology and geography, but few of these consider the implications of their findings directly on consumer behavior. In addition, more attention has been paid to the individual consumer than to the consuming unit of the family (broadly defined to be individuals living in proximity and maintaining an enduring sense of connection and responsibility). In this paper, we bring both of these issues to the forefront. Our focus asks: when the family system includes disability, particularly a disability that is visible to other consumers in the marketplace, how does the family experience otherness, how do they adapt to their new constraints, and, eventually, how do they resist exclusion and form new marketplace connections.

Major transitions in the family system require qualitative reorganizations of the inner world of the family, family roles, and close relationships (Cowan and Cowan 2003). Anticipated transitions (e.g., becoming new parents) are filled with consumption activities that prepare and socialize families into their new role. However, often with little warning, families are thrust into transitions when they are confronted with serious illness, impairing accidents, or disabilities that present ongoing challenges to family dynamics (Rolland 2003). Unexpected transitions are also embedded with consumption, but, unlike anticipated transitions, there are few consumer roadmaps for this terrain. How does one shop when a family member now uses a wheelchair (or for that matter, where does one shop for a wheelchair)? Are favorite stores accessible? Even if accessible, are they hospitable? Even if the store is open and welcoming, are the other patrons going to stare or be cruel? While a plethora of modern media provides support to the new family, or the family sending a child to school or college, virtually no resources provide the day-to-day marketplace support that families living with special needs require.

Adding to the dilemma of limited information is the problem of being visually different from other marketplace consumers. As social norms evolved in the past three centuries, regulations arose to proscribe appropriate behaviors in public spaces and on the streets (Foucault 1967 in Mirzoeff 2002, Glennie 1998). Places of death and illness were set aside from the rest of society; unsavory activity was pushed to the “other side of the tracks”; criminals were no longer displayed for public gaze, but were sequestered behind thick walls. One by-product of this process is that there was, and still is, little room in the marketplace for consumers who look, sound, smell, or speak differently. The disability revolution in the latter half of the 20th century reintroduced the disabled into family life.
How Individuals Mentally Account for Work-Time Volunteerism: Putting the Work into Volunteer Work

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Volunteering occurs during work time for many individuals. Companies are increasingly allowing employees to use work time for volunteering (Easwaramoorthy, Barr, Runte and Basil 2006). We examine this topic from the employees’ perspective to determine whether work-time volunteering is viewed as work, or volunteering, or some combination, and how this perspective impacts the quantity of volunteer work an individual performs overall.

One seminal volunteerism framework identified six fundamental motivations of volunteerism (Clary et al. 1998). We address how these motivations impact the categorization of volunteer work.

We use mental accounting to assess individuals’ categorization of volunteering. Both context (whether the volunteering is performed during work or on personal time) and coordination effort (whether the employee or the employer organized the volunteering) are expected to impact how individuals mentally account for their volunteerism.

When considering volunteering done during work time, categorization is somewhat ambiguous. It could be viewed as a work activity and/or as a volunteer activity. Individuals should prefer to categorize work-time volunteering in a manner that is hedonically most beneficial.

An individual’s motivations for volunteering should impact the mental accounting of volunteer time. If an individual is strongly motivated to volunteer, then the volunteering aspect of work-time volunteering should be somewhat more salient than the work-time aspect of work-time volunteering. If work issues are more salient to the individual than volunteer motivations, categorization should lean toward a work activity rather than a volunteer activity. As such we expect work-time volunteering to compose a unique mental account when volunteering motivation is low, but to be categorized into an overall combined mental volunteering account when volunteering motivation is high.

Similarly, if an individual is highly involved with a cause greater emphasis should be placed on the volunteering aspect of work-time volunteering. The individual would then be inclined to categorize work and personal-time volunteering into the same combined volunteering category.

Competing hypotheses are proposed regarding whether holding separate mental accounts for volunteering will increase or decrease the tendency to substitute work-time volunteering for personal-time volunteering. Mental accounting suggests categories are relatively infungible (Thaler, 1999). If work-time volunteering and personal-time volunteering are viewed as separate accounts, mental accounting suggests that work-time volunteering would not substitute for personal-time volunteering. If instead they are viewed as part of the same volunteering account, an individual might reduce his or her personal-time volunteering if s/he begins volunteering during work hours.

However, this perspective does not take into account the fact that the value of volunteering is not equal for those who hold separate and combined mental accounts for volunteering. We have proposed above that those who hold one combined mental account for volunteering do so largely because they are involved and motivated to volunteer. If so, then it is likely that the opportunity to increase the behavior will be readily accepted. As such, we would not expect individuals who hold one combined mental account to reduce their personal volunteering when given the opportunity to volunteer at work, because they garner benefits from volunteering. These two competing hypotheses are tested.

Methods

A national survey was conducted. Respondents were recruited from an on-line research panel. The sample of 2,125 Canadian respondents was selected to be nationally representative in terms of age, gender and education. The survey contained a total of 47 questions. Questions addressed personal-time volunteering, work-time volunteering, and demographics.

Results

Volunteering that occurs during work-time was seen as less of a volunteer activity and more of a work activity, compared to volunteering that occurs after work. Volunteering organized by the employer was seen as less of a volunteer activity than volunteering organized by the employees themselves.

Higher levels of involvement enhanced the view that work-time volunteering and personal-time volunteering should be combined into one mental volunteering account. Also, three of the six motivations for volunteering suggested a combined accounting process. Overall this suggests that a higher level of involvement and motivation does encourage combining volunteerism into one mental account.

Those with high levels of involvement indicated a significant tendency to increase personal-time volunteering if allowed to volunteer during work-time. Those with low levels of involvement did not demonstrate significant changes in personal-time volunteering due to work-time volunteering opportunities. Those who use a separate mental account for work-time volunteering indicated a significant tendency to reduce personal-time volunteering as a result of work-time volunteering. Those who use a combined mental account for volunteering indicated a tendency to increase personal-time volunteering as a result of work-time volunteering.

Discussion

The context of the volunteering and the coordination of the volunteering effort impact how individuals categorize volunteer work. Volunteering will be seen as more of a work activity and less of a volunteer activity if it occurs during work hours and if it is organized by the employer.

The categorization of volunteering depends upon involvement and volunteering motivation. Individuals who are more involved with the cause tend to use a combined approach to mentally account for volunteering. Those who are less involved tend to view work-time and personal-time volunteering as separate accounts. Similarly, individuals who are more highly motivated to volunteer tend to utilize a combined volunteering account and are less likely to segregate work-time volunteering from personal-time volunteering.

How an individual categorizes volunteering impacts total volunteer hours. Those who use a combined account tend towards increasing personal-time volunteering as a result of work-time volunteering, whereas those who use separate mental accounts tend towards decreasing their personal-time volunteering as a result of work-time volunteering.
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Assume you plan to buy a new notebook and you are browsing through the information of several notebooks that are currently offered. Of course, you want to make sure you select the best notebook available. What decision strategy should you follow? Although common sense would advice you to deliberate consciously about the notebooks’ characteristics, a growing literature has recently shown that conscious deliberation during evaluative decisions is not always beneficial (e.g., Dijksterhuis et al. 2006; Levine, Halberstadt and Goldstone 1996; Wilson and Schooler 1991). For instance, research by Dijksterhuis and colleagues on unconscious thinking (see Dijksterhuis and Nordgren 2006, for an overview) demonstrates that distracting your attention away from the decision task for a while is a better decision strategy. More specifically, after distraction consumers were better able to distinguish more favorable from less favorable product alternatives, made better product decisions (e.g., Dijksterhuis 2004; Dijksterhuis et al. 2006), and eventually were more satisfied with their product choice (Dijksterhuis and van Olden 2006).

This study contributes to this stream of research by investigating to what extent specific processing mindsets affect the positive effect of distraction on the quality of product decisions.

In the present research, we distinguish two main processing mindsets consumers can engage in: a configural processing mindset and featural processing mindset (see Halberstadt and Niedenthal 2001; Macrae and Lewis 2002; Wilson and Schooler 1991). A configural processing mindset is characterized by a gestalt-like, holistic appraisal in which the stimulus is seen as an entity. This implies that consumers who process product information configurally will evaluate products in a more general way and form a clear distinction between the attractiveness of the different product alternatives. As opposed to a configural processing style, a featural processing mindset is characterized by a breaking down of the gestalt of a stimulus into its component features. This implies that consumers who process product information featurally will evaluate products in a more detailed way and form an impression of the positive and negative features of each product alternative. By consequence, it has been shown that processing information in a configural manner typically results in more integrated and extreme product representations in the consumers’ memory, while processing information in a featural way leads to more differentiated and moderated product representations (Brauer et al. 2004; Federico 2004). Given that for consumers who hold extreme product attitudes it is easier to distinguish less from more attractive products, we hypothesize that distraction will only result in superior product decisions when consumers have a configural mindset and not when they engage in featural processing.

Two experiments were conducted to test this hypothesis. In these experiments, participants were presented with attribute information about 4 different product alternatives (i.e., one rather desirable, one rather undesirable and two fillers). After the presentation of product information, they were asked to evaluate the products either immediately or they first performed an unrelated task that distracts attention away from the product evaluations (i.e., a 7-minute anagram task). In experiment 1, the processing strategy was manipulated directly by instructing the participants to either form overall (configural) judgments or detailed (featural) judgments. It was observed that unconscious thinking resulted in increased distinction between the most and least favorable product alternative, but only when the participants were requested to form overall judgments. In a second experiment, we investigated if the effect of distraction on product evaluations is affected by the participant’s chronic tendency to either engage in a configural or featural processing mindset. This tendency was measured by using the need to evaluate scale (Jarvis and Petty 1996), which captures individuals’ implicit motivation to form configural evaluations. It was observed that participants who were distracted for a while were better able to discriminate between notebooks compared to those who evaluated immediately. However, this difference was only obtained for participants high on need to evaluate and, therefore, motivated to form configural product representations. No difference was observed for those having a weak tendency to evaluate and, thus, a featural mindset. So, it is the consumers’ processing mindset that determines whether distraction helps to evaluate products or not. This was demonstrated using both situational and chronic activations of the processing mindset.

References


The Effects of Emotions and Product Attachment on Consumer Preferences for New Products
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In contemporary high-tech consumer goods market, products are launched at an unprecedented rate, and consumers are forced to make their choices among ever more products, functions, and configurations of functions among product alternatives. In addition, new trends in product design add to this complexity by equipping products with aesthetic qualities. In such situations, it is unlikely that the variance in consumer preferences for new products could be fully explained by the cognitive and rational decision making process, as suggested by research on innovation adoption.

Research on innovation adoption assumes that adoption decisions result from a careful assessment of product benefits in relation to previous product knowledge, perceived product complexity, and learning costs (Moreau, Lehmann, and Markman 2001; Mukherjee, and Hoyer 2001; Thompson, Hamilton, and Rust 2005). Consumers are expected to weigh available alternatives against each other, and make full use of accessible information.

In contrast, an increasing body of evidence from consumer behavior studies points to the role of affective cues in consumer choice making and product use, and to the interference and influence of emotions on cognition and judgment. With reference to high-tech consumer goods, studies on paradoxes of technological products, technophobia and feature fatigue (Mick and Fournier 1998, Gilbert, Lee-Kelley and Barton 2003; Thompson, Hamilton, and Rust 2005) stress the significance of semi conscious and unconscious aspects of new product evaluation. In addition, studies in the field of product design show that consumer decisions can be influenced by the way new products look (Desmet, 2004). Further, emotional reactions consumers have toward new products can be related to the product they currently own (Straehilevitz and Loewenstein 1998).

In line with these findings, we propose that consumers evaluate new products in the light of products they currently own. In particular, we suggest that the length of product ownership influences positive and negative emotions consumers experience during own product use. These emotions can directly influence consumers’ preferences for unknown, new products. In addition, positive and negative emotions derived from product use can have effect on product attachment. Product attachment represents a special meaning an individual assigns to a product (Kleine and Baker 2004). It is reflected by a variety of emotions and is therefore not equal to positive or negative emotions. Consumers can be happy about a product without becoming attached to it, or may be attached even though the attachment is reflected by negative emotions. As product attachment represents an emotional bond between a person and a specific object, we propose that it mediates the effects of positive and negative emotions on consumer preferences for new products.

We examined the influence of ownership on emotions and the role of emotions and product attachment on consumer preferences for new products in an empirical study. Three new to the market, high-tech products: an mp3 music player, a PDA, and a mobile phone were used as stimuli. Respondents were asked to evaluate them based on product picture and short description. Participants were then asked to list products they own that in their opinion have similar functions to the presented product, and state how long they owned these products. As a final task, participants were asked to choose one of the products they listed and answer a number of questions related to product use.

The length of product ownership was measured as number of years a product was owned. Preferences for new products were measured using a nine item evaluative scale from Roehm and Sternthal (2001). We classified emotions among the bipolar positive and negative affect dimensions (Russel 1980). Positive emotions were measured using four items, and negative emotions using two items. Product attachment was measured using three items adapted from Ball and Tasaki (1992). All scale items were considered reliable. We used partial least squares (PLS) modeling to examine the links between the length of product ownership, positive and negative affect, product attachment and preferences for new product. Path significance was estimated using bootstrapping (500 re-samples).

The results show that the length of product ownership influenced negative emotions reported by study participants ($\beta=.484, t=6.67, p<.01, \ R^2=.23$) but had no significant impact on positive emotions. To estimate the mediating effect of product attachment on consumer preferences for new products we followed the procedure of Baron and Kenny (1986).

Both positive and negative emotions influenced product attachment ($\beta=.686, t=12.8, p<.01$) and ($\beta=.173, t=2.46, p<.01$) with $R^2=.59$. The interaction between negative and positive emotions was insignificant. Both positive and negative emotions had a direct effect on product preferences when product attachment was controlled ($\beta=.547, t=6.35, p<.01$ and $\beta=.194, t=2.15, p<.01$), $R^2=.423$. Product attachment significantly influenced product preferences, ($\beta=.310, t=3.146, p<.01$, $R^2=.461$) while direct effect of positive emotions were smaller than in the model in which product attachment was controlled ($\beta=.328, t=2.57, p<.01$), and the direct effect of negative emotions was insignificant. Introducing the additional path between product attachment and preferences for new products had a significant effect of .066.

The results show that product ownership influences the emotions consumers experience during product use. Positive and negative emotions elicited through experiences and interactions with own products have an effect on consumer preferences for new products. This effect is mediated by product attachment towards own product.

In conclusion, consumer preferences are, to certain extent, rooted in the emotions derived from product use. It is important for the practitioners to recognize the fact that designing and launching flawless products, supported by emotionally laden advertising might not be enough to win new consumers. It is products’ potential to generate positive emotions that may become a decisive factor in succeeding in saturated and competitive markets.

References


Never-Ending Desires: Assessing Consumers’ Propensity to Desire Consumption Objects
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ABSTRACT
This paper discusses the dimensions of consumers’ propensity to desire consumption objects. Eighteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with consumers from different age categories and social milieus. A thorough analysis of the narratives revealed the existence of four dimensions of consumers’ propensity to desire consumption objects: pleasure, discomfort, guilt, and control. Participants were also questioned about their level of materialism, their unsatisfied desires, their ability to cope with unsatisfied desires, their satisfaction with their current life, and their subjective well-being. The relationships between these concepts are explored and implications of the proposed concept for different streams of consumer research are discussed.

BACKGROUND
Saint Augustin, an ancient philosopher, stated that “happiness is continuing to desire what one possesses”. This a priori simple assertion integrates three fundamental facets of humanity: happiness, desire, and possessions. The present research emanates from the observation that some consumers cannot prevent themselves from constantly desiring consumption objects, whereas others are less inclined to desiring such objects. Some consumers want to live a luxurious life of abundance, constantly looking for objects that will bring them satisfaction and happiness, whereas others do not pay much attention to possessions, believing that happiness resides in simple things.

This research is concerned with an unexplored concept in consumer behavior, i.e., the propensity to desire consumption objects. More precisely, the objective of this research is to identify the dimensions of consumers’ propensity to desire consumption objects and to discuss the implications of this concept for other related concepts such as materialism, subjective well-being, aberrant consumer behaviors, and voluntary simplicity.

LITERATURE REVIEW
In this research, the concept of desire is approached from an emotional/psychological perspective, although the social and cultural aspects of desires (Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 2003; Girard 1977; Wilk 1997) are not ignored. According to Frijda (1986, p. 85), a desire is a positive emotion that reflects a “tendency to bring nearer whatever the desire is for”. Presumably, this emotion is induced by the thoughts of, or the encounter with a fit object not possessed, when such possession seems to be called for. Whereas consumption desires refers to the set of objects, products, brands or possessions, when such possession seems to be called for. Whereas consumption desires are limited in number. Belk, Ger, and Askegaard (2003) also integrate the concept of desire. Temptations are defined as short-term motives (Fishbach, Kruglanski, and Friedman 2003), causing a sudden desire to acquire an object (Baumeister 2002 refers to an “infatuated desire”). Studies have generally linked temptations to impulsive consumption and especially to impulsive buying. Frijda (1986) mentions that emotional behaviour often displays the characteristics of impulsiveness, and Belk et al. (2003) observe that impulsive buying seeks immediate fulfillment. However, desires are not always pressing, they can be cultivated and fostered through time. Not all consumption desires induce impulsiveness; otherwise many consumers would go bankrupt.

Desires versus dreams. Another related concept to consumption desires is that of consumption dream. d’Astous and Deschênes (2005) conceptualize consumption dreams as mental representations of consumption objects that consumers desire and experiences that they want to realize. Within this perspective, consumption dreams are said to be activated and monitored by the consumer. The authors further state that dreaming about consumption objects is sometimes the only available alternative for consumers faced with constraints preventing them from consuming (e.g. financial constraints, non-availability of the product, religious, cultural or social restrictions). Obviously, desired objects can be dreamed of, but the possession aspect of consumption dreams does not appear to be as important as it is for desired objects. Dreaming of consumption objects is a pleasurable activity in itself and does not induce discomfort and frustration as it is the case with consumption desires (Belk et al. 2003).

Desires versus goals. Consumption desires should also be contrasted with consumption goals. Goals are desirable states that one is committed to attain through action (Kruglanski 1996). The nuance between goals and desires appears to lie on the aspect of
commitment; in general, commitments to goals appear to be much stronger than commitments to desires. There is also a stronger connectedness between goals and intentions than between desires and intentions, as desires are of a higher level of abstraction (Perugini and Bagozzi 2004).

In conclusion, it has been argued in this section that although the concept of consumption desire is related to other concepts such as passions, temptations, consumption dreams, and goals, it does not seem to be confined to uniquely one of them.

METHOD

Since there are few studies on the topic of desire, and none on the propensity to desire consumption objects, a qualitative approach seemed appropriate to investigate the topic. An exploratory qualitative research was conducted in order to identify the different dimensions underlying the propensity to desire consumption objects. Specifically, eighteen semi-structured interviews were conducted. Individual interviews give the opportunity to delve deeply in the experiences of consumers and allow assessing the subtle links between concepts of interest. The discussions were structured around five sections of an interview guide. The first section dealing with experiences of consumption desires was the most important part of the interview and pursued a phenomenological approach, as explained by Creswell (1998).

Participants

Participation was done on a voluntary basis. The participants were French-speaking adults, aged between 21 and 79 years (see Table 1), who came from different social milieus. Some participants had greater financial means than others and the majority had a university degree. The age diversity allowed a rich amalgam of different life stages. The interviews were conducted on the campus or in the house of the participants, at their convenience. Each semi-structured interview lasted between 30 and 90 minutes. The participants had a good understanding of what was expected from them and responded adequately to all questions.

Interview Guide

The interviewer started with a brief introduction that explained the objective of the research and the concept of consumption desire. In order to avoid ambiguities, a consumption desire was defined as “any product, service, or experience that one desires. It could be a sophisticated and expensive object or a simple and inexpensive one”. The interview guide integrated five sections as described below:

- Section 1: participants were asked to talk about past experiences where they felt and experienced desires for consumption objects. These experiences were a starting point to assess their propensity to desire, the nature of those desires, and their importance in everyday life.

- Section 2: participants were questioned about their degree of materialism, using the dimensions of Belk (1985) and Richins and Dawson (1992). Open-ended questions were formulated on the basis of these dimensions to allow the informants to elaborate their response (e.g. “In general, what importance do you give to material objects or things that you possess?”).

- Section 3: participants were asked about their unsatisfied desires, and about the desires they thought would be left unsatisfied, and the reasons for such situations.

- Section 4: participants were asked about their ability to cope with unsatisfied desires.

- Section 5: participants were questioned about their subjective well-being and satisfaction with their present life.

All the interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed individually. The participants were contacted a second time and were provided with the transcriptions and analysis to get their feedback and to be sure that the interpretations adequately reflected their feelings and opinions. Though some adjustments were made and additional explanations added, in general the analyses and interpretations represented adequately the participants’ points of view.

RESULTS

Because the aim of the study is to assess consumers’ propensity to desire consumption objects, it was important to obtain detailed descriptions of relevant phenomena. The transcriptions of the raw data were subjected to a phenomenological analysis following the general steps developed by Giorgi (1985). The descriptions were read entirely in order to get a general sense of the whole statement. Meaning units were detected and delineated from each interview. The informational insights deduced from these meaning units were analyzed and expressed more directly. Finally, a coherent statement describing each dimension of the phenomenon was elaborated.

Characteristics of Consumption Desires

The analysis of the data revealed additional interesting characteristics of consumption desires, refining and complementing previous studies on the subject. In agreement with the results of Belk, Ger, and Askegaard (2003), the desire for consumption objects was mainly felt by the participants as an emotion that can be pleasurable, but also uncomfortable. Consumption desires appear to be of variable intensity, depending on their importance for the consumer. The content and accessibility of consumption desires also seem to be important characteristics. In general, getting any particular desired object may be more or less difficult, but is considered, in the mind of most consumers, as realistic and realizable. In other words, consumers generally desire objects they think they are able to put their hands on, even if the desire is associated with some difficulty. This aspect is consistent with the notion of

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Distribution of informants according to age and gender

TABLE 1
perceived performability of desires, discussed by Perugini and Bagozzi (2004). When the probability to accomplish a given desire is low or quasi-null, participants would qualify it as “a crazy desire”, “a fantasy”, “a dream”, or “a phantasm”. On the other hand, a consumption object that is too easy to get is not a desire but becomes some sort of “evidence”. One important finding of this research is that consumers make distinctions between concepts related to consumption desires. This implies that these concepts should not be used interchangeably by consumer researchers and that efforts are still needed in order to draw up the boundaries of each concept, and to study the overlapping areas.

**Dimensions of the Propensity to Desire Consumption Objects**

Participants’ propensity to desire consumption objects was studied through the narratives of consumption experiences. To illustrate, the following verbatim of a male participant reveals a high propensity to desire consumption objects (all verbatims were translated from French by the author):

“I’d say that they (consumption desires) are relatively present. It seems that I’ll deprive myself, it’s very rare, because I’m always thinking of something I can get: I don’t have this, I’ll need that… all the time, all the time. Obviously, I would not necessarily spend, I wouldn’t buy, but I have the impression that I create needs that are exclusively based on desires: I saw that, it’d be fun… I’d need it… and I always find something. For companies, I’m an excellent consumer” (participant F, 21 years old).

Four dimensions emerged through a thorough analysis of the interview data. Three dimensions (pleasure, discomfort, and guilt) reflect the emotional facets of the concept, whereas the dimension of control reflects its cognitive facet. A summary of the qualitative study results was sent to a prominent consumer researcher working in the area of consumption desires to get his comments on the adequacy of the dimensions. Feedback was very encouraging, and some adjustments were made on the basis of his remarks. The four dimensions that are described below are supported by several statements of the participants.

**Pleasure.** The propensity to desire consumption objects integrates a pleasurable feeling mentioned by all participants. It is the pleasure of having desires, and also the pleasure of feeling able to realize them. This dimension agrees with the results of Belk, Ger, and Askegaard (2003) who argue that “desiring desire” is pleasurable in itself. The majority of informants asserted that they would not be happier if they realized all their unsatiated desires because it would mean loosing this pleasurable feeling.

Consumption desires described by the participants fall into one or the other types of pleasures (intellectual, social, emotional, and physical) reported by Dubé and Le Bel (2003). It is interesting to note that the pleasure derived from the entire desire experience is intensified when consumers take the time to desire the object before getting it.

“I think that the nice moments do not happen during the event itself, but before. We are talking about traveling… say we are going to Hawaii; the best moments of the travel are before leaving, it’s when you are preparing yourself, it’s when you are anticipating the fun you will have, it’s when you are on the plane. I say to my boyfriend: «Normand, it’ll go so fast, these are the best moments!»… sometimes I tell him: «pinch me! It must not go fast; we have to crystallize this moment” (participant M, female, 45 years old).

**Discomfort.** Consumers desiring consumption objects are exposed to different levels of negative emotions, such as disappointment, frustration, sadness, and sometimes jealousy and envy toward others. These emotions are generally caused by consumers’ inability to satisfy a particular desire immediately and they reflect the internal tension they experience. The intensity of these negative emotions is heightened by the importance of the desire for the consumer, the hope that comes with its concretization, and the effort done to achieve it. These elements are consistent with those presented by Ortony, Clore and Collins (1988) in their analysis of the intensity of negative emotions.

“If I really desire something, I can feel frustrated” (participant R, male, 24 years old).

“I feel disappointed. I don’t know but, I’d say “why do others get what they want and not me!” But it’s not hatred” (participant B, male, 21 years old).

“I felt sad. Disappointment and envy toward people who were chosen (for a humanitarian mission), and frustration toward the evaluators, feelings of unfairness” (participant S, female, 20 years old).

“It makes me heartsick, it affects my mood, and generally this bad mood goes on my children and my boyfriend, depending on who is present” (participants M, female, 45 years old).

**Guilt.** Lazarus (1991) explains that the emotion of guilt is generated by having done, or wanting to do, something the person regards as morally reprehensible (p.240). It is interesting to note that Lazarus’ (1991) conception implies that there is no need for an actual transgression to feel guilty; simply imagining oneself in some transgression situation is sufficient.

The propensity to desire consumption objects appears to create a dilemma between abstinence and satiation, and succumbing to a desire sometimes causes feelings of guilt. Consumption desires often involve some financial considerations and compromises, which can lead consumers to hesitate before acting, and sometimes to feel guilty before and afterward.

Some participants stated that they could feel guilty only because they had consumption desires. That is, some consumers feel guilty either because they have too many consumption desires, or because they desire expensive and ostentatious objects. It is therefore important to note that consumers have different degree of proneness to guilt.

“Christmas time eliminate it (the guilt)... It’s like you are forced to consume, so the idea of pleasure is more present because you don’t feel guilty to spend, because you have to make these purchases. So it’s this way, and it’s fun because it’s the only time of the year that you shop with lots of bags in your hands, you go to boutiques of different styles” (participant S1, female, 20 years old).

“…I also feel this guilt relating to traveling... ambivalence between guilt and satiating the desire… we often travel my
boyfriend and I, and we leave the children at home, so the guilt is deep. I want to travel, to satiate my desire, but leaving the children alone more than 2-3 days, it starts to...after 5-7 days the guilt is larger than the fun I have to satiate my desire. I think it’s the case for several consumption experiences” (participant M, female, 45 years old).

“Our swimming pool is fantastic...and we hesitated a lot (before having it). Always this idea of compromise, consequences, and we felt a little bit guilty, it’s so ostentatious, it’s an “extra”, and it doesn’t necessarily fit our values. We are not people that dress like those who have money, or those who have luxurious things, that’s not me” (participant M, female, 45 years old).

**Control.** This dimension represents the cognitive aspect of the propensity to desire. On one hand, some consumers have difficulties to control themselves or to resist to desired objects. When they have the opportunity and the financial means, they are willing to let themselves go, and to succumb. As Belk et al. (2003) observed, consumers not only lose control but also abandon themselves to the object of longing. On the other hand, some consumers voluntarily restrain themselves in order to avoid feeling weak. Other consumers go even further and consciously inhibit themselves from desiring objects they can’t put their hands on.

The propensity to desire consumption objects integrates ambivalence between letting go and restraint. Consumers are generally looking for a balance between taking control and being controlled by their desires of consumption objects. This observation is consistent with Frijda’s (1986) analysis of emotional phenomena. In fact, the author asserts that the balance between impulse (absence of control) and inhibition (or voluntary control) shifts constantly as a function of the actual need for caution and control, and the person’s daring, sense of competence, desire to hold himself or herself in hand, and similar variables. It is also worth noting that consumers appear to «play» (consciously act on/ fluctuate) with this dimension of control in order to better appreciate the desired object.

“I could say that I generally follow my desires...when I want something, I just can’t wait” (participant F, male, 21 years old).

“I don’t resist, I really don’t...If I really want it, I buy it, I don’t know what resisting means” (participant M, male, 52).

“(Resisting) it will depend on the last time you succumbed to your desires. If you have done a big expenditure last week, not necessarily utilitarian...next time, you have more “brakes” to succumb. If it has been a long time since you succumbed to one of your desires, you will give away, we become weaker and more permissive” (participant JP, male, 39 years old).

“My desires are controllable, I’m able to control them...generally, I buy things I planned to buy...On the other hand, I’ll feel weak if I give away and buy anything else. I feel like I give away too much to my desires, and I try to restrain myself as much as possible” (participant R, male, 24 years old).

**Additional Results**

As mentioned previously, the participants were questioned about their level of materialism, their unsatisfied and insatiable desires, their coping abilities, satisfaction with their current life, and their subjective well-being. The results look very relevant and several relationships between these concepts deserve to be investigated further.

Belk (1985) argues that possessiveness, non-generator, and envy are the three main dimensions of materialism. Possessiveness appears to be the dimension that has the strongest association with the propensity to desire consumption objects. Several participants with a high propensity to desire are willing to share their possessions and do not exhibit envy toward other consumers. Richins and Dawson (1992) consider materialism as a consumer value incorporating the centrality and importance of acquisitions. Within this perspective, acquisitions contribute to the pursuit of happiness and success is defined through acquisitions. The propensity to desire consumption objects appears to be related to the importance of acquisitions, but not with the two other dimensions of materialism. Acquisitions are generally relegated to a secondary level in the definition of happiness and success, even for participants with a high propensity to desire. In brief, the relationships between the propensity to desire consumption objects and the dimensions of materialism as a consumer trait or value deserve to be studied.

Unsatisfied desires are explained mainly by a lack of financial resources, or a lack of time and competence. The effort to achieve these desires is variable and depends on their centrality for the consumer. For their part, insatiable desires are considered as impossible to achieve, and they take little place among the considerations and plans of the participants. Faced with the inaccessibility of such desires, consumers do not spend any energy on them and exclude them from their “list” of desires. One female participant even said that she prohibited herself from desiring “objects” that she thought she could not acquire. As mentioned before, participants qualified impossible desires as “dreams”, “fantasies”, “illusions”, etc., without any expectation to realize them. However, it may be very pleasurable to think of them. On the basis of the interviews, insatiable desires do not appear to influence life satisfaction and the subjective well-being of the participants. This result contrasts with the conclusions of Solberg et al. (2002) who argue that unobtainable desires, as well as the degree of desirability of unobtainable goods, have a negative impact on satisfaction. Their research focused on satisfaction from the point of view of personal income and with material well-being, and this may therefore explain the differences with the present results.

The propensity to desire consumption objects integrates a frustration dimension, leading consumers to use several coping strategies to manage it. Several strategies emerged through the interviews (e.g. “It’s not meant to be, it’s not meant to be”, “I don’t think of it”, “I try to rationalize, to think of it: it’s this way, you can’t do anything!”, “If I don’t have the financial means, I’ll let it go”, “I’ll convince myself to defer it later on”), and are consistent with the coping strategies discussed in the literature (e.g. Duhacheck 2005; Lazarus and Folkman 1984; Sunghwan and Baumgartner 2004). In the context of this research, the ability to cope with frustration varied from one participant to the other, depending among other things on the importance and the intensity of the desire.

The propensity to desire consumption objects does not appear to affect satisfaction with life and the subjective well-being of the participants. Participants of different age groups emphasized elements such as work, achievements, family and friends, etc. as being more relevant determinants of their satisfaction and well-being. Being in front of an interviewer could have influenced the responses to this subtle question. Therefore, the effects of the propensity to desire on satisfaction with life and subjective well-being deserve to be studied further.
CONCLUSION AND NEED FOR ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

The study of consumers’ propensity to desire consumption objects can be considered as an attempt to answer Baumgartner’s (2002) call for a better understanding of the individual consumer. It should have some impact on various streams of research such as materialism, the subjective well-being of consumers, aberrant consumer behaviors, and anticonsumption attitudes.

The relationship between the propensity to desire and consumer’s materialism is worth studying because it looks ambiguous. Materialism is a set of centrally held beliefs about the importance of possessions in one’s life (Richins and Dawson 1992). It was also defined by Belk (1984) as “the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions” (p. 291). Common sense would suggest that a high propensity to desire consumption objects would lead unavoidably to a high level of materialism. The qualitative research data indicate however that it is not necessarily the case. A follow-up research will try to disentangle the relationship between these two concepts and to study their effects on consumers’ subjective well-being. The subjective well-being of consumers should be given more attention in consumer research. Previous studies have found that a high level of materialism is negatively associated with subjective well-being (Burroughs and Rindfleisch 2002; Belk 1984). However, the propensity to desire consumption objects does not appear to affect subjective life satisfaction and well-being. In fact, desiring is pleasurable, motivating, and satisfying in and of itself. Investigating the relationship between the three concepts should be enlightening.

It should be also interesting to assess the impact of the propensity to desire on aberrant consumer behaviors. The consequences of such behaviors in the North American economy are enough important to warrant a great interest in their study. Aberrant and dysfunctional consumer behaviors include credit misuse and abuse, compulsive buying, and purchase of counterfeit goods (Budden and Griffin 1996). It is important to examine whether a high propensity to desire ultimately lead to such aberrant behaviors and, if it is the case, how it leads consumers to engage into these behaviors.

The propensity to desire could have an impact on consumer’s indebtedness. The quest for satiating desires is not without its costs and many consumers could easily find themselves in the “debtor’s prison” (see Bernthal, Crockett, and Rose 2005). Credit cards are part of daily life, but they are far from being used only for necessities. They are usually considered, by consumers, as an empowering and facilitating means for consumption (Bernthal, Crockett, and Rose 2005). However, almost half of credit cards holders in the United States do not carry a monthly balanced payment (Manning 2000). In this context, it could be interesting to identify the determinant dimensions that lead to an exaggerated level of indebtedness and to verify if indebtedness can be explained by the quest for pleasure, control, compensation, or another dimension of the propensity to desire consumption objects.

Compulsive consumption is another matter of concern. Faber and Christenson (1996) propose that biochemical, psychological, and sociological causes are underlying factors of this behavior. Among the psychological causes, Faber, O’Guinn, and Krych (1987) have identified the desire for stimulation and arousal. This is consistent with the results of the qualitative research, for respondents with a high propensity to desire acknowledged their attractiveness to novelty. Moreover, O’Guinn and Faber (1989) have found an association between compulsive buying and the tendency to fantasize. Although the concept of propensity to desire is different from fantasizing, a parallel could be drawn.

In addition, a high propensity to desire consumption objects, combined with limited financial resources, could lead consumers to satiate their desires through alternative ways such as buying counterfeit products. Tom et al. (1998) argue that consumers who purchase counterfeit goods are attracted by the opportunity to buy branded products that communicate the desired prestige of legitimate products at a substantially lower price. Although participants in the qualitative study were not questioned on this issue, some of them spontaneously talked about satiating their desires through shrewd ways, not necessarily counterfeited products, but ones that are not as expensive as “the best products”, but bringing them the same level of satisfaction.

From another perspective, the concept of propensity to desire consumption objects could bring new insights in the literature of anticonsumption attitudes, especially with regards to voluntary simplicity (VS), and could help to better understand the process by which consumers join this relatively new trend. Voluntary simplicity is based on a system of beliefs and a set of practices that are principally aimed at minimizing the consumption of material goods in order to achieve satisfaction, fulfillment, and happiness in life (Zavestosky 2002). Without doubt, adhering to the movement is a voluntary action, but studying the psychological profile and some individual characteristics (e.g. propensity to desire) of these consumers could enable researchers to predict which consumer is likely to join the movement. Does adhering to voluntary simplicity means having a very low propensity to desire consumption objects? How do these consumers control and manage their natural propensity to desire? Is it through inhibition or reorientation? Within this same perspective, an interesting issue was also raised during the interviews. Some consumers appear to be confined to “involuntary simplicity” and are struggling with their propensity to desire consumption objects.

The present research represents a starting point to a larger project. In fact, based on the dimensions deduced from the qualitative inquiry, follow-up studies will be conducted to elaborate a measurement scale to assess consumers’ propensity to desire consumption objects, and the relationships between this concept and other concepts discussed in this paper will be examined.

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Product Attachment and Satisfaction: The Effects of Pleasure and Memories
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ABSTRACT
Product attachment is the emotional bond a consumer experiences with a product. We empirically test the relationship between product attachment and satisfaction. The results suggest that product attachment and satisfaction are both affected by a product’s utility and appearance. Pleasure is a pathway through which utility and appearance indirectly influence attachment and satisfaction. Utility has a direct effect on satisfaction as well. Only for product attachment, the presence of memories serves as another determinant having a direct effect. In addition, it moderates the effect of appearance. These results suggest that product attachment and satisfaction are two different post-purchase behavior concepts that have no direct relationship.

Consumer behavior research has focused primarily on purchase behavior, whereas knowledge of all phases in the consumption cycle, from acquisition, through use, to disposition is valuable. As a result, less is understood about the consumer-product relationship, even though post-purchase behavior plays an important role in, for instance, replacement purchases and consumers’ well-being. This paper investigates the post-purchase behavior construct of product attachment.

In the literature on interpersonal relationships, it is suggested that attachment is an emotion-laden target-specific bond between two persons (Bowlby 1979). Correspondingly, product attachment is defined as “the strength of the emotional bond a consumer experiences with a product” (Schifferstein, Mugge, and Hekkert 2004). This definition implies that an emotional tie exists between an individual on the one hand and the object on the other hand. Furthermore, the object to which a person experiences attachment triggers one’s emotions. People develop attachment to products that convey a special meaning (Wallendorf and Arnould 1988). If a person is attached to a product, disposing of this product is undesirable. People feel that when losing the product, the special meaning that is conveyed by the product is lost as well. So people strive to maintain products to which they feel attached, and they exhibit protective behaviors toward these products (Schultz, Kleine, and Kernan 1989).

Kleine and Baker (2004) suggested that product attachment is conceptually distinct from materialism, involvement, brand attachment, and attitude toward the object. Materialism refers to consumers’ tendency to be attached to possessions in general (“possessiveness”), whereas product attachment is typically concerned with a specific object or product variant (Wallendorf and Arnould 1988). Additionally, product attachment differs from the construct of involvement (e.g., Bloch 1982), because involvement is generally conceived as the importance of a whole product category to a person (Ball and Tasaki 1992). Product attachment is also conceptually distinct from consumer-brand relationships (e.g., Fournier 1998), because the latter imply that consumers develop relationships with brands, rather than with specific objects (Kleine and Baker 2004). Finally, product attachment differs from attitude (Kleine, Kleine, and Allen 1995; Schultz, Kleine, and Kernan 1989). Stronger attachments are not always associated with positive emotions, nor are negative feelings always associated with weak attachments.

Although scholars asserted that product attachment is conceptually distinct from several other constructs, the empirical demonstration of their relationships has been limited (Kleine and Baker 2004). This paper empirically tests the relationship between product attachment and satisfaction. Past research has concluded that the pleasure a product evokes as a result of its utility and/or its appearance positively affects both product attachment (Kamptner 1995; Schifferstein, Mugge, and Hekkert 2004) and satisfaction (Mano and Oliver 1993; Oliver 1997). Consequently, this study investigates the effect of pleasure on product attachment and satisfaction. More knowledge on how product attachment, satisfaction, and pleasure relate to each other and in what aspects they are similar or distinct enhances the comprehension of consumers’ post-purchase behavior.

In addition to the pleasure a product evokes, we investigate the effect of memories associated with the product, because memories have a relatively strong effect on the development of product attachment (Schifferstein, Mugge, and Hekkert 2004; Wallendorf and Arnould 1988). We include memories to investigate how pleasure and memories may interact with each other. Furthermore, incorporating this determinant may help us to better distinguish product attachment from satisfaction. Whereas the memories associated with a product are strongly related to product attachment, no effect on satisfaction is expected. In this paper, we propose and test a conceptual model of the relationships between product attachment, satisfaction, pleasure (as a result of a product’s utility and appearance), and memories (see Figure 1). The model is explained in the next paragraphs.

PLEASURE
To examine the relationships between product attachment, satisfaction, and pleasure, the processes by which a product’s utility and appearance affect these concepts are explored. We start with a discussion on the processes by which a product’s utility and appearance can bring about the experience of satisfaction.

An important conceptualization of satisfaction is based on the expectation-disconfirmation paradigm (E-D-paradigm) (e.g., Oliver 1980). According to this paradigm, the degree of satisfaction for a product is related to the confirmation or disconfirmation of prior expectations; that is the difference between the expected and the perceived performance of a product. When the product’s performance is acceptable, the cognitive evaluations of the product’s utility result in the experience of satisfaction. People experience more satisfaction for a product performing better than expected than for one performing according to expectations (Oliver 1980; 1997). Through the cognitive evaluations, the product’s utility directly affects the degree of satisfaction. In addition, Mano and Oliver (1993) found an indirect relationship through the affect elicited by the product. Their framework is based on the idea that satisfaction is not a purely cognitive evaluation. Emotional responses elicited through consumption of a product may affect the experience of satisfaction as well (Oliver 1997; Westbrook 1987; Westbrook and Oliver 1991). The utilitarian evaluations of a product can result in the experience of pleasure if the product performs extraordinarily well, and pleasure serves as a mediator for this effect on product satisfaction (Mano and Oliver 1993). In addition, people can derive pleasure from merely looking at a beautiful product (Creusen and Snelders 2002). Literature in the field of product design corroborates that pleasure is affected by
utilitarian and appearance-related aspects of the product, and may positively affect satisfaction (e.g., Jordan 1998). In conclusion, we hypothesize that the determinant utility has a direct (via the cognitive evaluations of the E-D-paradigm) and an indirect effect (via the mediator pleasure) on satisfaction. Hence, pleasure serves as a partial mediator for the determinant utility (Mano and Oliver 1993). For the product’s hedonic features (e.g., product appearance), pleasure serves as a perfect mediator (Mano and Oliver 1993), because these features elicit affective responses, and no cognitive evaluations (via the E-D-paradigm). Figure 1 displays these relationships.

Utility and appearance do not only affect satisfaction, but are also reasons for people to consider a product as treasured (Kamptner 1995), special (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981), or favorite (Kleine, Kleine, and Allen 1995; Wallendorf and Arnould 1988). People become attached to products for the special meaning these products convey. To obtain a special meaning, a product should provide the owner with something exceptional over and above its utilitarian meaning (Mugge, Schoormans, and Schifferstein 2005). Accordingly, we suggest that products with superior utility and/or a superior appearance can stimulate product attachment. A product with superior utility offers extra utilitarian benefits (e.g., extra features, greater usability, or higher quality). Due to these superior benefits, the product may elicit a state of pleasure that other products do not elicit. As a result of the experienced pleasure, the product obtains a special meaning to the owner, which can result in the development of an emotional bond to this product. On the contrary, products with average utility and average appearance do not evoke pleasure and are replaced much easier, because most other products in the category provide the same utilitarian and appearance-related benefits. Consequently, these products are less likely to result in product attachment.

Based on these arguments, we believe that pleasure serves as a perfect mediator for the effects of utility and appearance on product attachment (see Figure 1). In contrast to the direct effect of utility on satisfaction, no direct effect of utility is expected for attachment. When a product does not provide the owner with superior benefits, (s)he may be satisfied with it, due to the cognitive evaluations of the product’s utility (Oliver 1997), but the product does not elicit pleasure or evoke feelings of attachment. These arguments are summarized as follows:

**H1:** For a product with above average utility, the degree of product attachment (H1a) and the degree of satisfaction (H1b) are higher than for a product with average utility.

**H2:** For a product with above average appearance, the degree of product attachment (H2a) and the degree of satisfaction (H2b) are higher than for a product with average appearance.
**H3**: Pleasure evoked by a product partially mediates the effect of utility (H3a) and perfectly mediates the effect of appearance (H3b) on the degree of satisfaction.

**H4**: Pleasure evoked by a product perfectly mediates the effects of utility (H4a) and appearance (H4b) on the degree of product attachment.

The preceding arguments suggest that product attachment and satisfaction are both affected by the construct of pleasure, but are not directly related.

**MEMORIES**

Products can remind the owner of a specific time, place, or person and can thus help to maintain a sense of the past (Belk 1988; 1990). Wallendorf and Arnould (1988) have shown that in the USA the explanation for valuing one’s favorite possessions is most often related to the memories they evoke. Due to the physical association between the product and a special person or place in the past, the product has gained symbolic meaning for the owner (Belk 1988; 1990). Products can be associated with both positive and negative memories. An example of the latter is a product that serves as a memento from hard times. However, people are more likely to become attached to possessions that are associated with pleasant memories, because people want to preserve the happy moments in life (Belk 1988; 1990). Accordingly, we focus on positive memories in this study.

Past research observed a relatively strong relationship between the positive memories associated with the product and the experience of attachment (Kleine, Kleine, and Allen 1995; Schifferstein, Mugge, and Hekkert 2004; Wallendorf and Arnould 1988). This may have consequences for the effects of other determinants on the degree of product attachment. If the degree of attachment is high due to the memories a product is associated with, the other determinants may become less relevant. For example, a person who has inherited a clock from his/her parents experiences a strong attachment to this clock, because of the memories associated with it. The attachment is not likely to decrease when its functionality decreases or when it is scratched. The clock still has its most important asset: memories. The impact of utilitarian and appearance attributes on product attachment is thereby reduced.

Because a product’s symbolic meaning is not directly related to its performance, we expect that the memories associated with a product do not affect the degree of satisfaction. Accordingly, we hypothesize:

**H5**: When positive memories are associated with a product, the degree of product attachment is higher than when no memories are associated with the product.

**H6**: Positive memories associated with a product moderate the effects of the product’s utility (H6a) and the product’s appearance (H6b) on product attachment. When positive memories are associated with a product, people experience product attachment regardless of the product’s utility or the product’s appearance. When no memories are associated with the product, people experience a higher degree of product attachment when the product’s utility or appearance is above average than when it is average.

**METHOD**

To investigate the effects of pleasure--as a result of the product’s utility or appearance--and memories on product attachment and on satisfaction, we use written scenarios. A scenario or vignette is a “short story about hypothetical characters in specified circumstances to which the interviewee is invited to respond” (Finch 1987, p. 105). Scenarios are useful for the study of product attachment, because they allow studying processes that develop over a long period of time in a limited time span. In addition, they allow focusing on the topic of interest, while controlling for additional variables that would interact in a real-life situation (e.g., type of product, financial aspects). This selective representation of the real world can help to disentangle the complexities and conflicts present in everyday life (Hughes and Huby 2002). An investigation on the validity of the use of scenarios has demonstrated a large degree of correspondence between the emotions experienced in a real-life setting and the emotions subjects believed they were likely to experience in a scenario-setting (Robinson and Clore 2001). Hence, scenarios can play a useful role in theory construction and scenarios are often used within research on post-purchase affect (e.g., Tsirios and Mittal 2000).

**Subjects and Design**

One hundred and sixty students volunteered to participate in the study (51% male, mean age=20). Eight experimental conditions were generated following a 2 (product’s utility: average vs. above average) × 2 (product’s appearance: average vs. above average) × 2 (memories associated with product: present vs. absent) between-subjects full factorial design. Each subject was assigned randomly to one of the eight conditions, resulting in a total of 20 subjects in each condition.

**Stimulus Material and Procedure**

The subjects were instructed to read the presented scenario1 carefully. The scenario portrayed a female person (named Susan), who owned a mobile phone. To operationalize the product’s utility, the scenario illustrated certain aspects of the mobile phone’s functions (e.g., 150 h. vs. 400 h. standby time; Internet functions absent vs. present) and its ease of use (needed to become accustomed to operation vs. straightforward operation). The determinant memories was operationalized by describing the manner in which the mobile phone was obtained (received as a gift from parents for graduation vs. an ordinary purchase). Appearance was operationalized using a set of pictures. Although several fundamental rules, such as unity, proportion (e.g., “the Golden Section”), and symmetry affect aesthetic appreciation (Veryzer and Hutchinson 1998), past research showed that individual differences exist for what people judge as a superior appearance, dependent on the person, culture, and fashion (Bloch 1995; McCracken 1986). Therefore, a scenario in which the product’s appearance is related to the owner’s taste seems preferable to study the effects of appearance. In the scenarios, a person’s taste for the appearances of consumer durables was defined by presenting color pictures of four products that the person liked for their design and color. Three designers of consumer durables had selected these products as being similar in style by mutual agreement. Two color pictures of mobile phones were selected, for which the styles of design were either similar or dissimilar to the four products (see Figure 2). The two selected mobile phones were similar in price. We expected the subjects in the “similarity” group to perceive the phone’s appearance as superior to that in the “dissimilarity” group, because only in the “similarity” group the mobile phone’s design matched that of

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1 Due to space limitations, the full text of the scenarios is not presented in the paper. Interested readers can request the scenarios from the authors.
the four products and, therefore, this phone fitted the person’s taste better than the phone in the “dissimilarity” group.

Subsequently, multi-item measures of expected product attachment (4 items, α=.78), satisfaction (4 items, α=.77), pleasure (3 items, α=.78), as well as the product’s utility (4 items, α=.77), its appearance (4 items, α=.94), and the presence of memories (3 items, α=.83) were obtained. The last three served as manipulation checks. The items were drawn from prior studies on product attachment (Mugge, Schifferstein, and Schoormans 2004; 2006; Schifferstein, Mugge, and Hekkert 2004). The items were presented in random order.

RESULTS

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed in LISREL 8.72 on the 11 items of product attachment, satisfaction, and pleasure to establish the convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement scales. The three-factor solution resulted in an adequate fit ($\chi^2=67.77$, df=41, $p=.005$; GFI=.92; CFI=.98; RMSEA=.068). Although the chi-square was significant, it was smaller than the rule of 2.5 times the degrees of freedom as suggested by Bollen (1989). Both the GFI and the CFI satisfied the minimum requirements of .90 (Bollen 1989). Moreover, the RMSEA was below the value of .08 (Browne and Cudeck 1993). Convergent validity was indicated by the fact that the items loaded significantly on their corresponding latent construct (all t’s>2.0). Discriminant validity among the scales was assessed in two steps. First, one baseline model (in which the correlations between all pairs of constructs were freely estimated) was estimated. Next, we compared this model to three alternative models, in which the correlations between pairs of constructs were constrained to unity (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). In each case, the constrained model exhibited a statistically significant increase in chi-square (mean $\chi^2=50.33$, df=1, $p<.05$), providing evidence of discriminant validity (Bagozzi and Phillips 1982).

Manipulation and Confounding Checks

Three separate $2 \times 2 \times 2$ ANOVAs were performed using the measurement scales for utility, appearance, and memories as the dependent variables and the three manipulations as the independent variables. Subjects in the “above average utility” condition perceived the utility of the product as better than those in the “average utility” condition ($M_{+}{}_{ut}=5.95$, $M_{0}{}_{ut}=4.44$; $F(1, 145)=155.76$, $p<.001$). In the “above average appearance” condition, subjects perceived the appearance of the product as better than those in the “average appearance” condition ($M_{+}{}_{app}=5.74$, $M_{0}{}_{app}=3.06$; $F(1, 151)=228.77$, $p<.001$). Subjects in the “memories” condition perceived the product more as a reminder of past experiences than those in the “no memories” condition ($M_{mem}=4.43$, $M_{no}$
The results revealed a main effect of utility on product attachment \((F(1,149)=4.73, p<.001)\) and satisfaction \((F(1,149)=8.04, p<.001)\). When the product functioned above average, the subjects reported higher degrees of product attachment \((M_{+ut}=5.45 \text{ vs. } M_{0ut}=4.53)\) and satisfaction \((M_{+ut}=7.16 \text{ vs. } M_{0ut}=6.10)\) than for a product with average utility. These results support hypotheses 1a and 1b.

Furthermore, significant main effects were found for utility on the dependent variables product attachment \((F(1,149)=10.54, p<.002)\) and satisfaction \((F(1,149)=16.67, p<.001)\). Subjects reported higher degrees of product attachment \((M_{+app}=4.49 \text{ vs. } M_{0app}=3.96)\) and satisfaction \((M_{+app}=5.39 \text{ vs. } M_{0app}=4.89)\) for the product with above average utility, than for the product with average utility. These findings support hypotheses 2a and 2b.

A main effect of memories on product attachment was also found \((F(1,149)=30.02, p<.001)\). As hypothesized, in the conditions where memories were present, the subjects reported more attachment \((M_{mem}=4.67 \text{ vs. } M_{no mem}=3.78)\) than those in the “no memories” conditions, supporting hypothesis 5. No effect of memories was found for satisfaction \((F(1,149)<1)\).

The results yielded a significant memories \(\times\) appearance interaction for the dependent variable product attachment \((F(1,149)=3.96, p<.05)\). Among the subjects in the “no memories” conditions, those presented with the product with above average appearance reported more product attachment than those presented with the average appearance \((M_{no mem, + app}=4.21 \text{ vs. } M_{no mem, 0 app}=3.36, t(76)=3.20, p<.001)\). However, among the subjects in the “memories” conditions, there was no significant difference between these groups \((M_{mem, + app}=4.77 \text{ vs. } M_{mem, 0 app}=4.57, t(77)<1, p>.20)\), supporting hypothesis 6b. Although, the hypothesized memories \(\times\) utility interaction \((F(1,149)=1.96, p=.16)\) was not significant, independent t-tests provided some support for hypothesis 6a as well. For the “no memories” conditions, subjects who read about the product with above average utility reported more product attachment than those who read about the product with average utility \((M_{no mem, + ut}=4.19 \text{ vs. } M_{no mem, 0 ut}=3.36, t(76)=3.20, p<.001)\). However, among the subjects in the “memories” conditions, no significant difference between the two “utility” conditions was found \((M_{mem, + ut}=4.87 \text{ vs. } M_{mem, 0 ut}=4.47, t(77)=1.86, p>.05)\).

Mediation Analysis

Baron and Kenny’s (1986) framework for mediation was used to investigate the role of pleasure in mediating the effect of utility and appearance on product attachment and satisfaction (hypotheses 3a, 3b, 4a, and 4b). Baron and Kenny’s (1986) test for mediation hinges on three statistical outcomes. First, the effect of the independent variables (i.e., utility and appearance) on the dependent variables (i.e., product attachment and satisfaction) must be significant without incorporating the effect of the mediator (i.e., pleasure), as was shown in the previous section. Second, the effect of the independent variables on the mediator variable must be significant. This was tested by performing a 2 \(\times\) 2 \(\times\) 2 ANOVA using the scores on the pleasure scale as the dependent variable and utility, appearance, and memories manipulations as the independent variables. This ANOVA supported the role of pleasure as a mediator by revealing significant main effects of utility \((M_{+ut}=4.97 \text{ vs. } M_{0ut}=3.97, F(1,151)=46.62, p<.001)\) and appearance \((M_{+app}=4.73 \text{ vs. } M_{0app}=4.21, F(1,151)=12.47, p<.001)\) on the mediator pleasure. No effect of memories was found \((F(1,151)<1)\).

Third, when the mediator variable is added to the original analysis as a covariate, the effect of the covariate on the dependent variables must be significant. Two separate ANCOVAs were performed with either product attachment or satisfaction as the dependent variable, and with utility, appearance, and memories manipulations as the independent variables. In both analyses, pleasure was included as a covariate. Pleasure significantly affected both product attachment as well as satisfaction \((F(1,148)=47.43, p<.001 \text{ and } F(1,148)=59.50, p<.001, \text{ respectively})\).

The analyses revealed that the previously significant main effect of utility on product attachment was no longer significant, when pleasure was included as a covariate \((F(1,148)<1, p>.20, \Delta R^2=.99\%\). This finding demonstrated that pleasure perfectly mediated the effect of utility on product attachment, supporting hypothesis 4a. For satisfaction, the main effect of utility was reduced \((\Delta R^2=50\%)\), but remained significant \((F(1,148)=31.41, p<.001)\) when we added pleasure to the analysis as a covariate. This suggested both a direct and an indirect effect (through pleasure) of utility on satisfaction. Thus, partial mediation was observed for the effect of utility on product satisfaction, supporting hypothesis 3a.

The main effect of appearance on product attachment and satisfaction was reduced \((\Delta R^2=68\% \text{ and } \Delta R^2=61\% \text{, respectively})\) when pleasure was included as a covariate, but remained significant for satisfaction \((F(1,148)=5.93, p<.02)\) and marginally significant for product attachment \((F(1,148)=3.14, p=.08)\). These results partially support hypotheses 3b and 4b: Pleasure appears to serve as a partial mediator for the effect of appearance on satisfaction, whereas perfect mediation was expected. For attachment, the main effect of appearance was only marginally significant and the effect size was not completely reduced. The reduction in effect size was similar to that for satisfaction. Based on these results, we interpret the mediation for product attachment also as partial.

Relationships between Product Attachment, Satisfaction, and Pleasure

To test the relationships between product attachment, satisfaction, and pleasure, we estimated a structural model in LISREL 8.72 using the 11 items to measure these three constructs. The model resulted in a satisfactory fit to the data \((\chi^2=71.39, df=42, p=.003; \text{ GFI}=92; \text{ CFI}=95; \text{ RMSEA}=0.07)\). The model supported our expectations: Pleasure had a significant positive effect on product attachment \((\gamma=.71, p<.01)\) and on satisfaction \((\gamma=.85, p<.01)\). A second model was estimated to explore the relationship between product attachment and satisfaction. Specifically, we estimated whether satisfaction had a direct effect on product attachment in addition to the effect of pleasure. The results showed that the fit of this model was not significantly better \((\Delta \chi^2=3.62, df=1, p>.05)\) than the original model and that satisfaction had no direct effect on product attachment \((\gamma=-.43, p>.05)\).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

This paper explores the relationships between product attachment, satisfaction, the pleasure evoked by a product’s superior utility and/or superior appearance, and the memories associated with the product. For the most part, the data appear consistent with the proposed conceptual model. Specifically, we find that product attachment and satisfaction are both affected by utility and appear-
ance. Pleasure is a pathway through which utility and appearance increase product attachment and satisfaction. Moreover, satisfaction does not relate directly to product attachment. These findings corroborate and extend Mano and Oliver’s (1993) framework regarding the relationship between satisfaction and affect.

Our results suggest that product attachment is conceptually distinct from satisfaction on at least two accounts. First, the mediation processes through the mediator pleasure are different: The product’s utility has a direct (via the E-D-paradigm) as well as an indirect effect (via the mediator pleasure) on satisfaction, whereas the effect on product attachment is only indirect (via the mediator pleasure). These results support the notion that satisfaction is an evaluative judgment of the product’s performance that develops as a result of both cognitive evaluations and affective reactions elicited in consumption (Mano and Oliver 1993). In contrast, product attachment is an emotion-laden bond that develops if the product has a special meaning to the owner (Schifferstein, Mugge, and Hekkert 2004; Wallendorf and Arnould 1988). An average performing product can result in the experience of satisfaction, because it is adequate and performs according to expectations. However, a person is not likely to become attached to a product just because it performs adequately, if it has nothing special.

Second, product attachment is directly related to memories, whereas satisfaction is not. If a product is associated with memories, the product helps the person to maintain his/her sense of past, due to which it gains a special, symbolic meaning. A product’s symbolic meaning is related to product attachment, but is not directly related to its performance and, hence, does not affect the degree of satisfaction. Furthermore, the memories associated with a product moderate the effect of appearance on product attachment (Schifferstein, Mugge, and Hekkert 2004; Wallendorf and Arnould 1988): When positive memories are associated with a product, the impact of the product’s appearance on product attachment is reduced. This study provided only partial support for the moderating effect of memories on utility (hypothesis 6a). Nevertheless, in another study, we did find a significant memories x utility interaction effect (Mugge 2007, Study 1). In this study, a scenario of a person and his photo camera was presented. However, this photo camera was not merely a gift for one’s graduation, but was also a reminder of a special weekend with the person’s father. As a result of this relatively stronger memories manipulation, the interaction effect was more likely to occur.

Our results suggest that pleasure is only a partial mediator for the effect of appearance on product attachment as well as on satisfaction, whereas perfect mediation was expected. A possible explanation for these findings for product attachment may lie in the role the product’s appearance plays in maintaining a person’s identity (e.g., Burroughs 1991). Products possess symbolic self-defining functions, which consumers use to define and maintain their identities. Consumers tend to prefer products and product appearances that are congruent with their self-concept (Sirgy 1982). Past research concluded that expressing a person’s identity is also a determinant of product attachment (Kline, Kline, and Allen 1995; Schultz, Kleine, and Kernan 1989; Wallendorf and Arnould 1988). As a result, a product’s appearance may not only have an indirect effect on the degree of product attachment through the mediator pleasure, but also through self-expression. For satisfaction, the finding that pleasure serves as a partial mediator for appearance seems inconsistent with the results of Mano and Oliver (1993), who found perfect mediation. However, Mano and Oliver (1993) investigated affect, of which pleasure is only one component. Probably, other emotional reactions (e.g., surprise) may serve as additional mediators for the effect of appearance on product satisfaction.

Implications

This study explores the concept of product attachment and shows that it is distinct from satisfaction. For companies, understanding the concept of product attachment is valuable for several reasons. First, experiencing product attachment can increase consumers’ loyalty to the brand (Davis 2002). In other words, the attachment to a product may be transferred to the brand, resulting in brand attachment. This can affect consumers’ future purchases, because consumers will be more eager to buy other products bearing the same brand. Moreover, attached consumers are likely to be more vocal in recommending the same product or brand to others.

Product attachment may also contribute to a sustainable society, because consumers tend to keep products to which they experience attachment for a longer period of time (Mugge, Schoormans, and Schifferstein 2005). Many products are disposed of while they are still functioning properly (DeBell and Dardis 1979). From a sustainability perspective, the early replacement of consumer durables is often undesirable, because it produces waste and uses up scarce resources.

If a company wants to stimulate the attachment that consumers experience to their products, our results suggest that they should introduce products with a superior utility or appearance. Furthermore, managers may stimulate the formation of product-related memories through their marketing efforts. In addition, Mugge et al. (2005) have proposed to stimulate attachment through the use of materials that wear gracefully in time. As a result of the wear and tear process, the product will reflect the shared history with the owner, and becomes associated with certain memories.

REFERENCES


Locus of Control as a Person-Situation Mediator in the Consumer Behaviour Context

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Retailers have long been aware of the situation’s impact on consumer behaviour, and engineer their retail environments to maximise favourable behaviours. Though studies have recognised consumer behaviour to be driven by a combination of internal ‘psychological’ and external ‘situational’ factors (Magnusson 1981), few have explicitly examined whether they vary in saliency between individuals. This study investigates the impact of locus of control on shoppers’ susceptibility to situational effect. This may facilitate greater reliability in predicting subsequent behaviour.

The Locus of Control construct originates from social learning theory and was developed to measure the degree to which individuals perceive events as resulting from their actions (more internally-oriented) or though luck, fate or chance (more externally-oriented) (Rotter 1966). Understanding an individual’s values and expectancies may enhance prediction of their behaviours. Over time, Rotter’s scale has been modified, resulting in many domain-specific scales, including the consumer locus of control scale (CLOC) used in this study (Busseri, Lefcourt et al. 1998).

Behaviour is a function of the interaction of two types of variables: those encompassing the situation, and those comprising the individual (Belk 1975). However, locus of control, contributing to the individual’s definition of the situation may itself affect the strength of the situational contribution to behaviour. Belk’s taxonomy of five situational variables outlined below provided the template for examining situational cues.

Physical Surroundings measures physical attributes of the situation, such as layout, music, lighting, and aromas. More internally-oriented, who rely more on themselves, are expected to correlate negatively with locus of control.

Social Surroundings relates to the presence of others, their characteristics and roles, and interpersonal interactions. The more externally-oriented are expected to be more persuadable by powerful others, follow trends set by others (Bailey 1987) and influenced by advertising, and therefore correlate positively with social cues.

The Temporal Perspective covers time of year or day, time since last purchase, pay day and mealtime (Belk 1975). The more externally-oriented are predisposed towards less planned, more impulsive behaviour, and in short-term situations, behave less rationally than the more internally-oriented (Koivula 1996), and therefore correlate positively with temporal cues.

Task Definition is the specific context of a shopping trip: utilitarian, hedonic or gift driven, and also intention to browse and buy. It also relates to the information-seeking and comparison aspects of shopping. The more externally-oriented are expected to show greater desire to browse without buying than the more goal-driven internally-oriented.

Antecedent States relate to momentary moods and conditions, such as anxiety, hunger and fatigue, that may affect consumers one instant, but not the next. These factors are within the consumer, but not enduring aspects of the consumer, and may be driven partially by locus of control. The more externally-oriented may take more cues from the environment and are therefore expected to correlate positively with antecedent states.

It is expected that a shopper’s susceptibility to each of the five types of situational cues will depend, in part, on their locus of control. As such, to following hypotheses are presented:

H1: Externality (more externally-oriented) correlates with physical affect.
H2: Externality correlates with social influence.
H3: Externality correlates with temporal affect.
H4: Externality correlates with task affect.
H5: Externality correlates with antecedent states.

Methodology
A questionnaire based study of shopping centre patrons visiting shopping centres in north-east England was used to aid understanding of locus of control’s role as a mediator of situational cues. Busseri’s context-specific CLOC scale was favoured to measure shoppers’ locus of control (Busseri and Kerton 1997). Five original situational scales were designed based on a review of the extant literature, and developed following the iterative process suggested by Churchill (1979). Scale items encouraged respondents to recall previous instances where situational variables had affected their behaviour. From a pilot, the five scales were refined to comprise 7 bipolar items each, after validity and reliability testing. Patrons at six shopping centres were given questionnaires, of which 292 were analysed (34% male, 66% female), with correlations used to determine the degree to which locus of control may be a predictor of susceptibility to situational variables.

Findings
For each situational variable, there is a small or moderate statistically significant negative correlation with locus of control (internal). The negative correlation between locus of control and physical surroundings (r=-.13, n=292, p<.05) suggests locus of control imparts small influence on susceptibility to physical cues. The more internally-oriented usually pre-plan their shopping trips, so physical cues may be secondary to them, whereas the more externally-oriented take their cues from the physical surroundings. Social surroundings had a small negative correlation with locus of control (r=-.17, n=292, p<.01). It is somewhat surprising that locus of control is not more important in driving susceptibility to social surroundings.

The negative correlation between locus of control and temporal aspects of the situation (r=-.15, n=292, p<.05) indicates that time pressure has a bigger role in purchase decisions made by externally-oriented consumers than internally-oriented consumers. The less time-aware externally oriented shoppers may act more impulsively when time pressured.

The negative correlation between locus of control and task related aspects of the situation (r=-.25, n=292, p<.01) indicates that the more internally-oriented are less inclined to partake in the aimless side of shopping characterised in the task scale than externally-oriented shoppers.

The negative correlation between locus of control and antecedent aspects of the situation (r=-.25, n=292, p<.01) indicates that the more externally-oriented shoppers are more susceptible to momentary moods and states than more internally-oriented persons. The more internally-oriented perhaps ignore their moods as they focus on their task.

The statistically significant correlations above support the earlier hypotheses, that susceptibility to situational cues relates to locus of control, though the size of the correlations suggest locus of

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control plays only a small role as a mediating factor. While correlations between locus of control and other situational variables are similar, the correlation with antecedent states is larger, suggesting that locus of control may be more important in moderating moods and states than the influence of factors manifest in the situation.

References
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Consumers have started to play increasingly active roles in the marketplace by pumping gas for their cars, checking themselves in at airports, and designing products such as t-shirts and sneakers. Co-production refers to these participative roles of consumers and has been formally defined as “the degree to which the customer is involved in producing and delivering the service” (Dabholkar 1990, p. 484). While commonly used strategies such as personalization and customization are designed to understand consumers’ preferences and to provide consumers with suitable recommendations, co-production allows consumers to take part in the actual creation, execution, and delivery of the product/service. Thus, the amount of control consumers assume over the product/service is a key difference between co-production and these other strategies.

This paper focuses on the role perceived control plays in co-production. Specifically, it examines how perceived control affects consumer judgments and the conditions under which perceived control leads to positive as well as negative responses. Past studies offer insights into the relation between co-production and perceived control (e.g., Bateson and Langeard 1982; Bateson 1985a, 1985b; Dabholkar 1996; Hui and Bateson 1991; Schneider and Bowen 1995; Silpakit and Fisk 1985), however, they have two shortcomings. First, they have emphasized primarily the positive consequences (e.g., enjoyment, higher service quality) of perceived control (see Godek and Yates 2005 for an exception). Second, they have conceptualized perceived control as one-dimensional. This paper aims to overcome these shortcomings by developing a conceptual framework that uses a multi-dimensional conceptualization of perceived control and shows how different types of perceived control may lead to positive as well as negative consumer judgments.

In social psychology literature, perceived control is viewed in terms of three dimensions: behavioral, cognitive, and decisional (Averill 1973). Behavioral control refers to “the availability of a response which may directly influence or modify the objective characteristics of an event” (p. 293). Cognitive control, on the other hand, is defined as “the way in which an event is interpreted, appraised, or incorporated into a cognitive plan” (p. 287). Lastly, decisional control is “the range of choice or number of options open to an individual” (p. 298). In general, past studies have documented positive reactions (e.g., greater tolerance of pain, reduced stress) in response to increases and negative reactions (e.g., feelings of helplessness, depression) in response to decreases in perceived control (Langer 1983; Hui and Bateson 1991). Burger (1989, p. 254), however, suggests that increases in perceived control may also be seen as undesirable and may give rise to negative responses “when the increase in perceived control leads to a high level of concern for self-presentation, when the person perceives a decreased probability of obtaining desired outcomes, and when the increased controllability leads to an increase in attention to the now-predictable events.” In each of these instances the person may relinquish control, experience negative affect, and perform poorly.

Building on previous work that suggests that giving consumers alternative choices to obtain a product/service increases their decisional control (Kelley et al. 1990; Schneider and Bowen 1995), I argue that providing consumers with a choice to co-produce should increase their decisional control. Given that co-production involves active participation of the consumer in construction of products/services, I also propose that those consumers who actually co-produce should experience higher levels of behavioral control as compared to those who did not co-produce.

Previous research links option to co-produce to overall consumer satisfaction judgments by arguing that customers who are given the option of co-production are more likely to be satisfied irrespective of whether they actually co-produce or not (Schneider and Bowen 1995). In order to capture the underlying processes, I differentiate between two interrelated components of consumer satisfaction: (1) the outcome, and (2) the process of arriving at the outcome (Bendapudi and Leone 2003). I argue that the decisional control that results from the availability of the option to co-produce will positively affect consumers’ satisfaction with the outcome. However, when consumers actually co-produce, the increase in their perceptions of behavioral control will positively affect their process satisfaction.

Three variables are proposed to moderate the relation between co-production and consumer judgments: outcome, self-presentation, and consumer ability. In marketing literature, outcomes are usually differentiated on the basis of whether they exceed, fall short of, or meet expectations (Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman 1993). I hypothesize that increases in behavioral control will lead to an increase in consumer satisfaction when the outcome is as expected or better than expected. However, when the outcome is worse than expected, co-producers may feel that they could have prevented this outcome and/or attained a better outcome if they had chosen not to co-produce or if they had done something differently. In these instances, co-producers will be more motivated than non-co-producers to engage in cognitive control to reappraise the situation. In line with research which suggests that one would feel more regret for those choices, decisions, and behaviors that were under his/her personal control (Zeeleberg et al. 1998a, 1998b, 1998c), I suggest that higher levels of overall perceived control in this case will lead co-producers to feel greater regret than those who did not co-produce.

An increase in perceived control implies that the person will carry greater responsibility for the outcome, which can lead him/her to be more concerned about self-presentation especially in the case of a failure (Burger 1989). Increased control also provides an opportunity for the person to influence the outcome of an event. However, in most cases, this influence is highly associated with the individual’s abilities (Abeles 2003). I suggest that when co-producers are concerned about self-presentation and/or their ability, they will be more likely to relinquish control, experience negative affect, and exhibit poor performance in response to the increase in their behavioral control.

This paper contributes to the literature by identifying a psychological response to co-production and by delineating its effect on consumer judgments. The proposed relations also hold important implications for managers who want to encourage co-production by showing the conditions under which increases in perceived control lead to favorable versus unfavorable outcomes.

References


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The extant satisfaction literature offers little insight into the effects of motivation and consumer goals on satisfaction. Yet it should be obvious that motivations and goals are important antecedents to any purchase; we argue these antecedents also ultimately affect consumer satisfaction. The purpose of our research is to investigate the relationship between motivation and satisfaction. More specifically, this research investigates how consumer satisfaction with a product is affected by an individual’s regulatory focus.

Higgins (1997) distinguishes between two types of regulatory focus: promotion and prevention. The two types of regulatory focus result in fundamentally different goals toward a desired end state. Promotion is characterized by approach-oriented regulation, and the eager pursuit of goals of advancement, aspiration and accomplishment (what Higgins calls “maximal” goals). Prevention, on the other hand, is characterized by avoidance-oriented regulation, and the vigilant pursuit of goals of security, protection and responsibility (also called “minimal” goals). We argue that pleasure from a positive outcome is more intense under promotion than under prevention, based on the notion that the attainment of maximal goals should lead to higher levels of satisfaction than the attainment of minimal goals.

Regulatory focus theory also suggests that post-consumption evaluations of dissatisfaction and regret will be different under promotion versus prevention. Outcome-regret levels are expected to be different, depending on regulatory orientation, since promotion-focused individuals are more concerned with errors of omission and prevention-focused individuals are more concerned with errors of commission (Pham and Higgins 2005). Prevention should therefore lead to conservative evaluations in both positive and negative outcome situations in an effort to avoid errors of commission. Conservatism, in this case, should translate into lower evaluations of positive outcomes and higher evaluations of negative outcomes. Therefore, we posit that promotion-focused individuals will experience greater regret and dissatisfaction as a result of an undesirable outcome.

In two experiments we demonstrate that these differences in regulatory focus ultimately influence consumer satisfaction, and that post-consumption evaluations are different under promotion than under prevention. Both experiments use a priming manipulation of ideals and oughts developed in prior research to access the participant’s temporary promotion and prevention focus (Higgins and Avnet 2004). Both experiments also employ the confirmation/disconfirmation paradigm commonly used in prior satisfaction research (Fournier and Mick 1999).

In experiment one, satisfaction with a common consumption good, coffee, was investigated using a 2 (disconfirmation: positive vs. negative) X 2 (goal orientation: ideals vs. oughts) between subjects design. The positive disconfirmation (PD) manipulation involved serving a hot cup of premium coffee. The negative disconfirmation (ND) manipulation involved serving very weak warm coffee to which baking soda had been added. Momentary accessibility of ideals versus oughts self-regulation goals were manipulated using a priming manipulation previously used by Pham and Avnet (2004). As hypothesized, the results showed a significant disconfirmation x goal interaction. More specifically, participants reported greater levels of satisfaction with good coffee under promotion than under prevention, and greater levels of dissatisfaction with bad coffee under promotion than under prevention.

Experiment two replicated the findings of the first experiment using a different product. In experiment two, participants reported their satisfaction with a camera by evaluating photos allegedly taken with the camera. Three key attributes were selected and manipulated: color, clarity, and sharpness. Each attribute varied on only two levels to operationalize performance, and hence disconfirmation. In the positive disconfirmation condition photo quality in all three photos was consistently good, whereas in the negative disconfirmation condition photo quality was consistently poor. The results from experiment two are consistent with the findings of our initial experiment, and provide more convincing evidence that motivation and goal orientation influence post-consumption evaluations of satisfaction. Participants reported higher product performance evaluations, were happier with the product, and more satisfied with a positive product experience under promotion than prevention. We also found that participants reported lower product performance, were less happy with the product, and less satisfied with a negative product experience under promotion than prevention.

The central tenets of regulatory focus theory suggest that individual decision makers assign different importance to the same decision, depending on their regulatory orientation or their means of goal pursuit. For the first time, the findings from our research demonstrate how this effect carries over into the domain of consumer satisfaction. We have presented evidence supporting the importance of motivation and goal orientation on post-consumption evaluations of products. We show that how a decision is made, and the motivation behind a purchase, ultimately influences consumer evaluations of performance and satisfaction. This research provides strong support for the need to integrate motivational dimensions of decision-making in future research investigating consumer satisfaction.

References


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction
The purpose of this research is to examine warning disclosure efficacy in the context of a healthful product, tuna fish. For years, health and diet experts agree that consumers should eat more fish because it is rich in heart-protecting omega 3 fatty acids (Platow 2006; The American Cancer Association; The American Heart Association). However, in December 2005, a popular American newspaper, The Chicago Tribune, published an investigative report which suggested that commonly consumed seafood has dangerously high levels of mercury, putting many consumers at risk (Roe and Hawthorne 2005).

Mercury is highly toxic, thus exposure can have devastating health consequences (most often neurological and renal disorders). Populations especially sensitive to mercury poisoning are fetuses and young children. In addition, because mercury accumulates in the body, taking up to one year for the body to expel it, the amount of mercury considered acceptable for women of child-bearing age is considerably less. Women are thus recommended to limit their intake of certain kinds of fish.

Warning Disclosure Literature
Many researchers have examined the impact of product warning disclosures (see Argo and Main 2004, and Stewart and Martin 1994 for comprehensive reviews). Warnings associated with many different product categories have been conducted however, an extensive literature search turned up only one study which employed a “food”-related product (i.e., diet sodas with a saccharin warning disclosure) (Schucker et al. 1983). Extant literature has focused on products that are generally perceived as unhealthful (i.e., alcohol and tobacco); whereas, fish is a relatively healthful product.

Research Objectives
The objective of this research is to determine the effect of an existing mercury warning disclosure (i.e., that legislated in the state of California, USA) on two measures of efficacy: (1) consumer beliefs and (2) purchase intentions. In addition, we want to determine if the effects of the warning disclosure are receiver dependent or if they differ between two segments of consumers—those considered at-risk for mercury overexposure (i.e., risk is of extreme relevance) and all others.

Research Questions
RQ1: Are there differences in the effect of California’s mandated seafood warning disclosure on beliefs regarding tuna fish, and fish in general for the general population and those considered to be “at-risk”?

RQ2: Are there differences in the effect of California’s mandated seafood warning disclosure on purchase intention of tuna fish, and fish in general for the general population and those considered to be “at-risk”?

Method
Survey methodology was employed in the study. Corresponding to the research objectives, respondents were recruited from two different populations (i.e., those considered “at-risk” and the general consuming population). Convenience samples were drawn for the study. Each participant was exposed to one of two treatments (i.e., tuna fish ad with warning disclosure or tuna fish ad without disclosure).

Results
The effect of the warning disclosure was measured by testing participants’ product specific beliefs, product category beliefs, and purchase intention. Efficacy can be tested by examining the effect of the disclosure on beliefs (informing consumers) as well as on intended behavior (Argo and Main 2004, Laughery et al. 1993). Findings here suggest that the existing warning disclosure used in California, USA is effective in informing consumers about the harmful attributes (i.e. risk) associated with the consumption of an advertised tuna fish product, the category of tuna fish as a whole, and fish in general. At the same time, this warning did not produce any statistically significant differences among the groups in the healthful beliefs associated with the advertised tuna fish product, the category of tuna fish, or fish in general. This implies that the industry could use a disclosure to inform consumers of potential risk, while not affecting perceptions of health benefits. Furthermore, it appears that the warning disclosure does not affect intent to purchase as no significant difference among the groups was found. Thus, the efficacy of the warning disclosure achieves the intended result (i.e., to inform), without altering purchase intention. This is a favorable outcome as there are health benefits associated with consuming fish and thus, it is not desirable for there to be a decrease in fish consumption among the general population.

Previous research also suggests that warning disclosure efficacy is respondent dependent (Stewart and Martin 1994). The results here support this claim. The “at-risk” consumers had stronger beliefs regarding the harmful attributes associated with the category of tuna fish and fish in general. This implies that the ‘at-risk” population is more sensitive to the warning and as a result, their beliefs are more significantly altered.

While one limitation of this study is that it utilized a convenience sample of American consumers, mercury overexposure is a global problem. This exploratory study is just a first step in a research agenda aimed at understanding consumers’ beliefs and consumption of fish, and how to best inform them of potential risks with products perceived to be healthful.

References available

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Mercury Warning Disclosure Efficacy on Consumer Beliefs and Purchase Intentions of Fish

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The Impact of Eco-Labels on Consumers: Less Information, More Confusion?
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The number of available eco-labels has dramatically increased over the years. Figures indicate a number of more than 1000 eco-labels on products in Germany alone. Given this number, the present study investigates whether the high number of eco-labels informs consumers or confuses them. In addition to the number of labels, also involvement and credibility were varied in an experimental setting as both variables play an important role in information processing of consumers.

Conceptual background and hypotheses

The problem of confusion arises since consumers are restricted in their cognitive ability to process information. The more information they are trying to process the higher the probability that they experience an information overload. In turn, information overload leads to confusion.

H1: A high vs. low number of eco-labels enhances consumer confusion.

If and to what extent a consumer faces confusion depends on further variables; particularly involvement plays a crucial role as it affects the depth and intensity of information processing. While high involved consumers dedicate their cognitive resources to a primary task, low involved consumers distribute their resources over several secondary tasks. The probability of information overload and consumer confusion is lower for those who focus a primary task as they are able to process the relevant information more deeply. Given the same amount of information, low involved consumers are much more likely to be confused.

H2: High vs. low involvement reduces consumer confusion.

Either private or governmental institutions assign labels to ecological products. In contrast to private institutions, governmental institutions are independent and their labels are perceived as more credible. The assumption is largely supported by attribution theory. Consumers attribute information provided by private companies to external causes (i.e. the necessity to sell their products), while they attribute information from independent sources to internal causes (i.e., the real opinion of the source that is based on objective data). In the first case, a reporting bias occurs such as that the deviance of the provided information from objective data is much more likely. Therefore, the source lacks credibility. Credibility is strongly related to the comprehension of information which reduces consumer confusion.

H3: Eco-labels provided by sources with high credibility (governmental sources) vs. sources with low credibility (private companies) reduce consumer confusion.

In case consumers are confused, they are less likely to consider as many available alternatives as possible and to evaluate the attributes of those alternatives correctly in order to come up with a satisfying purchase decision. Hence, they feel more uncertain. Furthermore, information overload and consumer confusion also reduces satisfaction. Uncertainty is the mediating factor as confusion increases uncertainty related to expectations of successful decisions and, by this, reduces satisfaction.

H4: Consumer confusion reduces (a) decision certainty and by this (b) consumer satisfaction.

Method

226 participants were randomly assigned to one condition of a 2 (low vs. high number of eco-labels) x 2 (low vs. high involvement) x 2 (high credible (governmental) vs. low credible (private company) source) between-subjects experimental design. Yoghurts were chosen as a test product as they are commonly advertised with eco-labels and the product is familiar to participants of the study. Involvement was manipulated following suggestions in the literature. The number of eco-labels was varied by using either two or six different labels for six yoghurts. Pictures of real yoghurts were used. Those pictures were redesigned using a graphic software in order to provide similar cans with neutral writing, same ingredient information, and using the same colors and shapes of the cans. The labels of the six yoghurts were either only private labels or private labels with one governmental label. Credibility of the sources was assessed by two pretests with 40 students each. Dependent variables of the experiment were certainty with the purchase decision, satisfaction, and consumer confusion.

Results

The manipulations worked as expected. ANOVA results show that the number of eco-labels significantly enhances consumer confusion. However, involvement has no significant influence on consumer confusion. The source of the labels has a significant effect that is in line with our assumptions. None of the interaction effects reveals significance. Results of a path model show that decision certainty fully mediates the effect of consumer confusion on satisfaction.

Discussion

Besides the effect of involvement, all other hypothesized relationships could be supported. The main focus of the study was to investigate the effect of the number of eco-labels on consumer confusion which came up with the strongest effect size in the analysis. Apparently, even involvement is not able to reduce consumer confusion or to moderate the effect of the number of labels. While this effect contradicts a-priori assumptions, a different kind of involvement may still be meaningful as we manipulated only situational involvement and not enduring involvement. Enduring involvement is more related to consumers’ a-priori knowledge which plays a crucial role in evaluating ecological information. The study also confirmed the effect of the labels’ credibility. Apparently, labels provided by governmental sources help to reduce consumer confusion as source credibility seems to be related to comprehensibility of stimuli.

Consumer confusion reduces decision certainty and satisfaction. This can lead to undesirable consequences for consumers and marketers. As consumer satisfaction is a main goal of marketers, the consequences of consumer confusion are profound. Hence, the study provides some practical implications. We suggest that private sources of eco-labels should consider the reduction of the number...
of labels, for instance, by fostering cooperative labels. Also stronger governmental regulation would offer a solution to the problems caused by the inflationary use of eco-labels.

The study also contributes to research concerning consumer confusion. Particularly, the results show that situational involvement may be of minor importance for reducing consumer confusion. Furthermore, the investigation of the consequences provides a partial model for the way consumer confusion affects consumer behavior. This provides an avenue for further research that could incorporate further determinants (e.g., product experience) and consequences (e.g., repurchases) of consumer confusion.

References


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Widespread deregulation in the electricity sector has paved the way for competition and service differentiation in alternative electricity generation methods. The production and marketing of green electricity presents significant challenges to providers. For technological reasons it is generally more expensive to produce (Green Power 2004). Marketers understand little of the green electricity consumers’ attitudes and norms (Minton & Rose 1997; Pollard, Kalafatis, East and Tsogas 1999). Only through a greater understanding of the green electricity consumer can marketers effectively target potential green electricity customers, who are willing to pay this price premium. While some consumers are generally skeptical of green claims, those who are concerned with environmental issues create a potentially profitable market.

Much research has focused on general green behavior, such as recycling (Diamantopoulos et al. 2003; Minton et al. 1997; Paladino 2005; Pickett, Grove and Kangun 1993; Yam-tang and Chan 1998). Moreover, comparable research has measured intentions to purchase green products and not actual purchase behavior (Laroche, Bergeron and Barbaro-Forleo 2001; Pollard et al. 1999; Roberts 1996). With reference to green electricity, many studies have focused on an intention or a stated willingness to pay a price premium (Batley, Colbourne, Fleming and Urwin 2001; Rowlands, Parker and Scott 2002; Rowlands et al. 2003). Given that the relationship between intention and behavior is affected by a number of factors, there exists a strong justification for further research which assesses the relationships between attitudes, subjective norms and green purchase behavior (Roberts 1996; Rowlands et al. 2003). This paper seeks to contribute to this body of work.

The purpose of this study is to further our understanding of the reasoning behind consumers’ purchase of green electricity. Specifically, the study extends the Theory of Planned Behavior to explore the effects of environmental knowledge, altruism, political orientation, locus of control, involvement and environmental concern on attitudes, intentions and behavior. These variables form the antecedents of a causal model, based on the framework of Azjen’s (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior.

Mounting environmental concerns are prompting many consumers to consider green electricity in their homes. Most studies that analyze attitudes and behaviors have taken place in the 1990s. The attitudes of many consumers towards green goods have changed dramatically in the past few years, particularly with the emergent challenges presented by climate change. As a result, there is a need for these ‘new’ attitudes to be assessed together with their impact on behaviors. Using Azjen’s (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior as the basis for analysis, this study explores the effects of environmental knowledge, altruism, political orientation, locus of control, involvement and environmental concern on attitudes, intentions and behaviors towards green electricity purchase. This study examines residential electricity customers.

A seven-page questionnaire was sent to a random sample of households. A final response rate of 72% was achieved after accounting for unusable surveys. To determine the suitability of factor analysis the Bartlett test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy were applied to each scale. Each scale was significant on the Bartlett test and exhibited a KMO measure of ≥0.6. The items were subsequently subject to factor and reliability analysis, meeting the requirements of convergent and discriminant validity as well as suitable reliability. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure all items.

Regression, using SPSS, was applied to test the variables. In general, the results support the hypothesized model. The findings indicate that the purchase of green electricity can be explained by environmental knowledge, altruism, environmental concern, involvement in electricity purchases and the social influence of friends. The mediating influence of attitudes was also assessed. Findings showed attitudes to fully mediate the relationships between behaviors and knowledge and between behaviors and altruism. Environmental knowledge had the strongest direct explanatory power over behavior.

The results suggest that marketers should seek to increase product involvement, appeal to consumer’s environmental concern and altruism, increase consumer’s level of environmental knowledge and encourage word-of-mouth communications in order to increase the adoption of green electricity. Given the importance of product involvement, involvement should also emphasize the importance and implications of making the right choice when contemplating the purchase of green electricity. Given the importance of involvement in electricity means that consumers are willing to expend a high degree of mental effort in decision making. This allows marketers the possibility of using more detailed and complex arguments, which tend to be more persuasive for high involvement products. This could mean including facts or scientific predictions of environmental degradation that provide a rational basis for purchasing green electricity. Lastly, the strong influence of friends presents an opportunity to enhance the adoption rate of green electricity. Marketers should seek to encourage the word-of-mouth activities of current green electricity customers. Further theoretical and managerial implications are discussed in the paper.

References


Friends of Victims: Personal Experience and Prosocial Behavior
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Why do some people donate money to research on Alzheimer’s and others to help nourish children in Africa? Why do some people ‘race for the cure’ of breast cancer while others walk for multiple Sclerosis?

Anecdotally, people often recount witnessing a relative or friend suffering from an ailment when expressing their motivation for giving to particular causes. For example, we personally know of many relatives of cancer victims who give to cancer charities and friends of AIDS victims who volunteer for AIDS awareness campaigns. Celebrities such as Nancy Reagan, Mia Hamm, and Rob Lowe all promote charities that benefit victims who suffer from an affliction from which a family member suffered. Perhaps because they can empathize or feel a connection to those anonymous targets of their donations, their personal experience with a particular misfortune appears to transfer to sympathy for other victims of that same misfortune.

The existing literature on charitable giving has concentrated on the influence of victims’ and donors’ characteristics on overall generosity, and on factors that lead specific donors to behave more generously towards specific victims. It has not addressed, however, why people exhibit different willingness to help victims of a given misfortune, independent of the specific victims involved. This is an important gap, because much of charitable giving outside the laboratory is directed towards organizations that benefits victims of specific misfortunes rather than towards specific victims or to victims who have certain personal characteristics.

In this paper we bridge this gap by showing that personal experience (i.e., knowing a victim) who suffered from a specific misfortune increases caring for other victims of the same misfortune. Prior research has found that personal experience increases risk perception and self-protective behavior such as purchasing insurance (see Weinstein, 1989 for a review), but the effects of experience on sympathy and charitable behavior have yet to be examined. We expect that experience similarly affects sympathy. That is, knowing someone who has suffered from a particular misfortune increases caring for other victims of that same misfortune.

A survey of volunteers confirmed that relatedness to victims of particular misfortunes is correlated with causes for which people volunteer. However, friends of victims may be more aware of the prevalence and seriousness of their friends’ ailment and might even perceive an inflated risk of becoming a victim. Therefore, knowledge could be driving the effect or even self-interest, if experience causes worry about oneself becoming a victim in the future.

An experiment which controlled for information and avoided any possibility of self-interested action showed that personal experience uniquely shapes social preferences. We endowed all participants with ten dollars and induced friendship between random pairs of individuals. Then we randomly made some participants’ “friend” into a victim, by taking away their money. Finally, each fortunate participant could share their money with another anonymous victim of money loss or to a general campus wide scholarship fund, depending on a random drawing. Participants gave more to another participant who lost their money when their friend had lost money than when there friend had not lost money. Donations to the scholarship fund did not depend on whether their friend was a victim or not. Thus, relatedness to a victim increased generosity to another victim of the same fate, but had no effect on generosity for a distinct cause.

In sum, donations of time and money involve both a choice to give and a selection among many options since there are many victims and many misfortunes which could be remedied by aid. Here, we demonstrate that personal experience with a particular misfortune is factor that affects the social preferences often seem inconsistent: people appear quite uncaring toward certain victims and quite altruistic toward others. Personal experience is apparently one important factor that can explain such inconsistencies.
Market Mavens and Opinion Leaders: Are They the Same or Different?
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ABSTRACT
Market mavens and opinion leaders are important consumer groups. This study investigates gender, product involvement, and need for variety as antecedents of these constructs and looks into their relationship with satisfaction and loyalty. Using data from 1,200 German consumers in four product categories, it was found that opinion leaders have higher levels of product category involvement than market mavens, while market mavens have a higher need for variety than opinion leaders. Further, gender does not appear to affect market mavenism. Finally, opinion leaders and market mavens tend to have higher levels of satisfaction and loyalty, but this varies across product categories.

References
Market Mavens and Opinion Leaders: Are They the Same or Different?


Consumers’ Changing Roles – from Creative Communities to Entrepreneurial Tribes
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Consumers are creative human actors in various consumptionscapes (Ger and Belk 1996). Yet, consumer activity goes far beyond that. Users join to make things on their own, share it with their online friends, and even set up successful businesses. Hence, they enter a new realm of consumer action which is actually innovative, creative, and productive, entering the sphere of production and entrepreneurship (Cova, Kozinets and Shankar 2007).

The objective of this research is to shed light on how inno-tribes negotiate, resolve, and restate contradictions and tensions that arise from their common practice as successful entrepreneurs. I will juxtapose current views of consumer agency with an empirically informed description of the free and open source software (F/OSS) movement—a global inno-tribe in cyberspace—and show how they define their changing role in discourse. Free and open-source projects have a long history of creating some of the world’s most successful software applications. Today, F/OSS-projects have reached the status of successful enterprises; they are forming partnerships with important industrial players and governmental institutions. Yet, their way of doing business is radically different in that free and open-source software is distributed with human readable source code, and free for download on the Internet.

Consumer Agency
Consumer agency in the literature has been dramaticized (Giesler 2005; Kozinets and Handelman 2004) for one thing. Researchers have argued that consumer groups’ emancipation from market hegemony can be described as collective action or social drama of a constant struggle against attempts of appropriation, which eventually results in a renewed interpretation of the marketplace. Conversely, in the tradition of co-optation theory the success of consumer activism has been questioned, postulating that consumer activism finds its natural end in the appropriation of the market (Heath and Potter 2004; Rushkoff and Goodman 2001). A third and recent argument has been brought forward by Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007) who have portrayed a consumer community that generated a countervailing market system in response to corporate co-optation, globalization and commoditization. Instead of pursuing an antagonistic view in which producers and consumers both vie for control, Kozinets et al. (2004) introduce the model of the ludic consumer-producer, who engages in productive performances that become part of the service.

In this article I offer a less dramaticized yet ideological; less ludic yet playful; and a less co-optational view of consumer agency and instead provide an entrepreneurial market narrative. Public discourse on main newsgroups and other sites, covering the years 2000 up to 2006 was used for analysis and interpretation. I chose a grounded theory approach (Glaser 1978; Glaser and Strauss 1967; Gouling 2002) adding non-participatory elements from Kozinets’ (2002b) netnography. I iteratively analyzed the data for emergent themes and confronted my interpretations with the extant literature.

Findings
The public discourses of the F/OSS tribe are articulations of consumers’ transition from participatory consumer cultures to an active, empowered, yet also much more contradictory multitude of innovating contributors. By negotiating the meaning and objective of consumer agency and its contribution to society and economy in discourse, the F/OSS tribe is beginning to move from a new social movement to becoming an entrepreneurial culture. The key findings show how they seek to define themselves at the crossroads of Utopian romanticism and activism, pragmatic agency and skepticism. These dialectical discourses merge into a collective imagination of the inno-tribe as a movemental, yet decently skeptical, pragmatically acting group.

Utopian romanticist and activist narratives. The romantic and the activist narratives determine whether betterment is more important than empowerment. In entrepreneurial discourse both views are vital as they provide the basic value system of the collective endeavor on the one hand, and a corrective of thoughtless action, on the other hand. Utopian romanticism is wrapped in altruist, gift-giving narratives, and a strong emphasis on passionate work. Activist discourse emphasizes resistance, freedom, and engages in social critique. Freedom, helping behavior and gift-giving are widely distributed notions, geared towards radical distinction from current capitalist practices on the market. These altruist notions imply a strong and deliberating force by emphasizing what they can achieve together without being trapped in “little systems that only help companies”. The notion of gift-giving is actually a romantic interpretation of openness. Openness also serves a narcissist striving for fame and glory that comes with a passionately created artwork that is cherished by the masses.

Pragmatic action and realist skepticism. Pragmatic discourse is strongly advocating collaboration, sharing, concrete action, and partnering with the industry. Realist skeptical discourse challenges naïve romantic, and overly pragmatic action as well. These views provide the hands-on work ethics for successful entrepreneurial action on the one hand; on the other hand skeptics serve as a ‘controlling authority’ who warns about the perils of co-optation by the hegemonic market forces. Both narratives derive from a deeply realist world view which stands in sharp contrast to the romantic and activist narrative. They provide the necessary ‘other side of the coin’ that enables creative Collectives to act entrepreneurial. Yet, a balance has to be achieved between pragmatic action and the ideological identity project of the tribe, showing the limits of both extremes. Contradictory stances are an important source of never-ending discourse; multitudes are necessary for a constant renegotiation of identity.

Discussion
Participatory consumer cultures have been portrayed in the literature as being different from traditional consumption cultures in that they exhibit resisting characteristics and set up countervailing markets. Our findings suggest that inno-tribes actually are as entrepreneurial and capitalist in their underpinnings as they are romantic and activist. The findings show that entrepreneurial tribes are able to act within the dominant capitalist market logic however, without giving up their identity. Entrepreneurial tribes contain a multitude and a myriad of stances which have to be continually (re-)negotiated in discourse. This multitude produces contradictions and provokes tensions that have to be addressed in discourse. I found that these contradictions are vital for inno-tribes’ identity search and for the meaning construction of their entrepreneurial endeavor.

References


Self-Construal, Impulsiveness, and Beer Consumption
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ABSTRACT
We propose and test the proposition that there is a systematic impact of cultural orientation (individualism vs. collectivism) and consumers’ self-construal (interdependent vs. independent) on impulsive consumption tendencies. We confirmed this hypothesis using a cross-country comparison of beer consumption data for countries varying on individualism versus collectivism (study 1), a cross-state comparison of problem alcohol consumption within the U.S. varying on individualism versus collectivism (study 2), and by priming self-construal (studies 3 and 4). Convergent results show that individualism is positively correlated with beer consumption across countries, with problem alcohol consumption within the U.S., and that consumers tend to have more positive attitudes toward immediate beer consumption when they receive an independent self-construal prime than when they do not. Conversely, consumers tend to have less positive attitudes toward immediate beer consumption when they receive an interdependent prime than when they do not. In addition, results indicated that peer presence moderates this effect (the self-construal effect is greater in peer presence than in the non-peer presence conditions) and that this effect holds for preference for vice products in general as well as beer consumption. Mediation analyses show that the effect of self-construal operates through state consumption impulsivity.

References
Compulsive Buyers and the Emotional Rollercoaster in Shopping
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Shopping is increasingly seen as a recreational activity in which consumers are emotionally involved. Instead of going to a store to buy necessary items, consumers often stroll around and browse for hours just for the fun of it. Shopping provides a necessary escape for consumers whose lives are hectic or otherwise troublesome. However, for some consumers, shopping can become more than recreation. Compulsive shoppers are consumers who are addicted to shopping. For these consumers, shopping is part of their lifestyle, and strongly related to emotional goals.

The emotions compulsive shoppers go through influence their feelings and satisfaction of the shopping activity. For example, consumers who have a bad day might go shopping to cheer themselves up, or consumers who have completed a difficult task at work might reward themselves by going shopping. For compulsive shoppers, the emotions involved with the shopping activity are particularly important, as they play such a large part of the consumer’s life and influence their happiness as a whole. Feelings such as joy, anticipation, thrill during the shopping activity can quickly shift over to guilt, depression, and dissatisfaction with managing one’s finances. Based on previous research results, literature has termed these consumers bulimic shoppers, who crave for shopping in excess, but afterwards get emotional qualms.

The emotions involved with shopping activities have usually been studied by examining how consumers feel before and after the shopping activity. The purpose of this paper is to extend on this view by examining consumers feelings with the shopping activity before, during and after the shopping process, to receive a more comprehensive picture of the emotional shifts consumers go through during the shopping activity. By examining all three stages, we expect to get a more refined picture of what emotions can change during the shopping activity, and what the triggers involved with these changes are.

To achieve the goal of the study, a three-step research methodology was employed. We first utilized an online questionnaire to identify consumers who could be classified as compulsive shoppers. Then, we conducted a digital ethnography study by communicating with consumers using their mobile phones. By communicating with consumers before, during, and after the shopping process using SMS and picture messages, we were able to be sensitive to the emotional changes consumers go through while shopping. Finally, we conducted personal interviews with the compulsive shoppers to allow them the opportunity to describe their feelings involved with the shopping activity with their own words. The three steps complemented each other, and provided us with the ability to cross-check and validate results across the different kinds of data collected.

The results show that compulsive shoppers go through an emotional rollercoaster during the shopping process. The trigger involved with the emotions is linked to finding a bargain. A bargain is defined as a good deal, or a situation in which the consumers perceive they get mental satisfaction from their purchase. If compulsive shoppers make a bargain, they feel pride, happiness, and goal achievement. However, if they do not manage to find a bargain, they feel disappointed, sad, and unsuccessful. These emotions switch back and forth during the shopping activity. The largest disappointment for these consumers occurs if they think they have managed to find a bargain, but realize that it was not one, after all (e.g., if the item is too expensive, or they do not have it in the customer’s size). However, this disappointed can be overturned if another bargain is found. These findings expand on those found by previous literature by showing the emotions consumers go through during the shopping process are not predominantly negative or positive before or after the shopping process. Instead, consumers move up and down on an emotional continuum during shopping, and can also feel positive emotions such as pride and satisfaction after the shopping activity.

References


Hoped-for Selves and Feared Selves: How Positive and Negative Reference Values in Self-Regulation Moderate Consumer Goal-Directed Efforts

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Many of the products and services available on the market are consumed as means of attaining desired end states (hoped-for selves) and/or preventing dreaded or negative end states (feared selves or undesired selves) (Morgan 1993; Patrick, Maclness, and Folkes 2002; Sobh 2006). Hoped-for selves and feared selves are representations of what is possible for us in the future and function as standards to attain or to escape (Markus and Nurius, 1986). Building on feedback control theory in social psychology (Carver and Scheier 1992, 2000), the present research examines how regulatory referencing engaged in by consumers (i.e., moving towards a hoped-for future self, or, moving away from a feared future self) influences consumer motivation.

While research in consumer behaviour has focused on the influence of distinct regulatory focus styles on persuasion and decision making, particularly from a Higgins-inspired perspective (e.g., Aaker and Lee 2001; Bosmans and Baumgartner 2005; Hamilton and Biehal 2005; Jain, Agrawal, and Maheswaran 2006; Keller 2006; Louro, Pieters, and Zeelenberg 2005; Pham et al. 2002; Pham and Avnet 2004; Raghunathan, Pham, and Corfman 2006), the topic of regulatory referencing from a control model perspective is yet to be explored. Besides, most research about consumer goal-directed behaviour examined behaviour aiming to attain goals or positive end states, as this has been the type of self-regulation most commonly studied in social psychology (see Carver 1996; Higgins 1996a). However, little is known about how the priming of positive end states (e.g., hoped-for selves) and undesired end states (e.g., feared selves) differentially influence consumer goal-directed efforts. We do know that whether people increase, reduce, or persist in trying to attain a goal is based largely on how well or badly they think they are doing. It is not clear however, how the impact of perceived progress and proximity to goals on future goal-directed efforts might vary according to the type of behaviour engaged in by consumers (i.e., approaching desired end states versus avoiding undesired end states).

Our research focuses on understanding these relationships. Specifically, using control theory’s approach to self-regulation we predict that regulatory referencing moderates the impact of both how fast a goal is unfolding (perceived progress in attaining/avoiding the hoped-for/feared self) and where someone stands (the perceived distance of the actual self from the hoped-for/feared self) on subsequent consumer motivation. In avoidance self-regulation, slow progress triggers negative high-arousal emotion (e.g., fear) while fast progress triggers positive low-arousal emotions (e.g., relief). Carver (2001, 2004) proposes that high arousal should energize more than low arousal, so slow progress should motivate more than fast progress, everything else being equal. In approach self-regulation, slow progress triggers negative low-arousal emotions (e.g., disappointment) while fast progress triggers positive high arousal emotions (e.g., excitement). High arousal should energize more than low arousal so fast progress should motivate more than slow progress. Accordingly, we predict that for avoidance behaviour, failure in self-regulation is more motivating than success and that success maintains motivational intensity more than failure for approach behaviour. We also provide insight into the psychological processes underlying these effects. Specifically, we propose that the impact of feedback information on motivation to exert goal-directed efforts is more strongly mediated by affective than by cognitive processes for avoidance behaviour. The opposite is true for approach behaviour.

We examine these issues in the context of women’s purposive behaviour in relation to dealing with visible signs of skin aging. In addition to the theoretical relevance of this context in addressing our theoretical claims, it has practical relevance because it aids in understanding the consumption of age defying-products and services linked to a multibillion industry.

To test for our predictions, an experiment was conducted among 203 women from an Anglo-European descent, with 103 in the approach condition (M=43.49 years, SD=9.8 years) and 100 in the avoidance condition (M=43.49 years, SD=10.44). Specifically, a one-factor (type of behaviour: approach versus avoidance) between-subjects design was employed. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions by receiving one of two versions of a survey designed to activate a discrepancy-enlarging regulation process versus a discrepancy-reducing regulation process. This was achieved through a guided imagery task with the aim to activate either a hoped-for self (e.g. looking younger than other people of my age), or a feared self (e.g. looking older than other people of my age).

A 2 (behaviour type: approach vs. avoidance) × 2 (progress rate: positive vs. negative) × 2 (distance: close vs. distant) analysis of variance (ANOVA) performed on women’s subsequent motivation to deal with visible signs of aging revealed that success and failure have opposing effects on subsequent motivation based on the type of goal-directed behaviour engaged. Specifically, findings indicate that when aiming to achieve a hoped-for self, successful progress maintains motivation more than failure. Yet when aiming to avoid a feared self, failure maintains motivation more than success. Further, slower than expected progress away from a feared self motivates consumers more when one is close to the undesired end state than one is distant.

A multiple regression of subsequent motivation on various predictors indicated that as expected, the impact of feedback information on motivation to exert goal-directed efforts is more strongly mediated by affective than by cognitive processes when behaviour aims to move away from a feared self and that the opposite is true when behaviour aims to approach a hoped-for self.

Thus, this research goes beyond existing theorizing about the asymmetric effects of these two types of affect qualities on behaviour (Higgins, 1987, 1998) and extends current understanding about how discrete affective states influence consumer behaviour (Hamilton and Biehal 2005; Pham and Avnet 2004; Raghunathan, Pham, and Corfman 2006; Yi and Baumgartner 2004; Zeelenberg and Pieters 2004; Zhou and Pham, 2004). It suggests that control model theory offers useful insights to researchers, first, by showing that discrepancy-reducing (i.e., seeking the hoped-for self) and discrepancy-enlarging (i.e., avoiding the feared self) goal-directed behaviours have different impacts on consumer motivation and second, by providing an explanation for those asymmetric effects.

Findings improve our understanding of a crucial issue in goal research; continued striving versus giving up. A useful avenue for future work would be to examine how regulatory referencing could moderate adaptive strategies in consumer goal pursuit. It could also be extended to males and consider other visible signs of aging.
beyond the face, such as musculature and other aging-health-related goals (e.g., longevity) and be applied to other contexts and types of goal-directed behaviours such as weight regulation, thus yielding significant implications in a social marketing context.

References


Hurt by the Ones that Should Love You the Most: Negative Impacts of Self-Comparative Advertising

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ABSTRACT
While considerable research has focused on other-comparative advertising (i.e., the comparison of a brand with competing offerings), to date, no research has examined self-comparative advertising (i.e., comparing oneself to a previous company offering or another alternative in the same brand portfolio). While self-comparative advertising benefits from the fact that litigation and competitive response from other organizations is mitigated, the possibility of consumers suffering regret and dissonance is enhanced. This paper presents and experimental investigation of self-comparative advertising focusing explicitly on previous purchase (none, competitor purchase and advertised brand purchase) and nature of the advertisement (non-comparative, other-comparative, or self-comparative).

INTRODUCTION
Many companies will endeavour to develop new and improved versions of their existing products in an effort to keep pace with the rest of industry and/or to meet the demands of customers. However, creating improved products raises an interesting question in regards to letting consumers know about the changes that have been made. Traditionally, either an advertisement promoting the improved product on its own or an advertisement extolling the virtues of the improved product relative to the competition have been used.

Comparative advertising itself has received considerable attention (for general reviews, see Barry 1993; Grewal, Kavanoor, Fern, Costely, and Barnes 1997; Thompson and Hamilton 2006). Efforts to date have focused exclusively on comparisons of the product of one company versus the product of another, shedding light on when such comparisons will be effective, as well as the competitive and potentially legal dynamic that results. This research does not directly or indirectly consider special issues that may emerge from self-comparative advertising (i.e., when a company directly compares one of its products to itself). The purpose of this paper is to: (1) review previous findings from comparative advertising; (2) consider the nature of self-comparative advertising and its relationship to and distinction from previous comparative advertising findings; and (3) present an empirical study examining hypotheses developed regarding self-comparative advertising.

PRIOR COMPARATIVE ADVERTISING LITERATURE
Barry and Tremblay (1979) offer one of the first articles that directly examines comparative advertising, initiating the discussion of when such efforts may be effective. Subsequent research supported the efficacy of this execution strategy, indicating that comparative advertising can enhance consumers’ perceptions of the brand (Pechmann and Ratneshwar 1991). Indeed, based on a meta-analysis of 77 papers regarding comparative advertising, Grewal et al. (1997) indicate such advertisements increased purchase intention and purchase behaviour, while also generating a more favourable attitude toward the sponsored brand.

Concerns with comparative advertising exist as well. The work of Grewal et al. (1997) also suggests that, in general, comparative advertisements may lower source believability and induce a less favourable attitude toward the ad. The efficacy of the advertising has also been found to vary with the familiarity of the sponsored brand. Comparative advertising is typically most effective for unknown or relatively lesser-known brands, as consumers are likely to confuse the source of message when two relatively well-known brands are compared (Pechmann and Stewart 1990). Chattopadhyay (1998) also found that comparative advertising for unknown brands was more effective, specifically after delaying consumer response.

There is also a strong body of evidence showing that the use of extensive negative comparisons may not lead to the desired effect. Although the detrimental impact may be mitigated providing some positive elements are also presented (Sorescu and Gelb 2000), Jain and Posavac (2004) indicate that an especially negative comparative ad (i.e., one that is derogatory against the competitor brand) may hurt the sponsored company. Findings suggest that such ads may lower believability and attitudes toward the sponsored brand and increase the number of counter arguments generated.

Other substantive concerns with this advertising format exist. These include the risk of litigation from the sponsored brand’s competitors arising from negative claims that border on slander (Petty 1997) and retaliatory ads from competitors in response to being targeted (Barry 1993). From a managerial standpoint, these issues may be avoided if comparisons are made within an organization. Kara, Kaynak, and Lee (1997) examined the effects of companies running associative comparative ads where one brand is compared to a different and more successful brand that is also owned by the same company. They indicate that under such conditions, respondents are more likely to believe the advertisement, needed little additional information to make a decision, and held elevated purchase intentions. An extremely important caveat is that the effects were only found for respondents who were aware that the two brands were under the same company. Given that the comparisons were produced by the same overarching legal entity (albeit with completely different brand names), this could be considered a weak form of self-comparative advertising. A more stringent definition is provided below.

SELF-COMPARATIVE ADVERTISING
Self-comparative advertising differs from comparative advertising in that, rather than comparing an existing product with a competitors’ offering, a self-comparative ad promotes a superior product offering by contrasting it with a prior or current product under the same brand name. One actual example would be a major car manufacturer (Volkswagen) running a print advertisement featuring pictures of both last year’s and the current year’s model (Tourge), with a subheading of “Vroom” underneath the former and “Vroommoooom” underneath the latter. While this may not trigger litigation or competitive reaction, it may very well evoke a number of responses, some of which may not be positive.

Theory Development
Individuals who have not yet purchased a product have no vested interest in one brand versus another— and no possibility for
any regret regarding a previous purchase decision. For such an individual, the competitive comparison ad provides information about the market place (i.e., this is better than competitive offerings). Hence, it is anticipated that the competitive comparison ad will generally be more persuasive than the self-comparative advertisement. The self-comparative advertisement signals that it is better than a previous offering, but does not necessarily provide new information about the product or service—or the strength of the product relative to competing alternatives in the marketplace. Hence, there is no reason to believe, all else being equal, that it will be more persuasive than a non-comparative advertisement (i.e., one that features the new product alone, without reference to any others).

H1. For individuals who have not yet made a purchase, the competitive-comparison advertisement results in higher brand consideration and purchase intent than either the self-comparison or single ad.

For individuals who have purchased the competing product, they are forced to resolve dissonance when faced with a competitive comparison advertisement—the advertised product is truly superior to their existing product, suggesting that future purchases should take this brand into consideration. Given that they had not purchased from the advertiser previously, they have little ability to feel betrayed by the advertiser—there was no expectation that the company that they did not support should be loyal to them. Similarly, there is no reason to believe that the self-comparative advertising by the advertised brand should result in decreased perceptions of trust for individuals who have not yet purchased the product.

Conversely, for those individuals who have recently purchased the advertised brand, it is possible that decreased feelings of customer loyalty and trust will emerge. They, in essence, learn that this is a company that will sell you one thing and then a short while later make it clear that by going with them you have made a poor choice—potentially evoking a sense of betrayal. This, in turn will result in diminished brand consideration and intent to purchase, relative to individuals competitive-comparison advertisement.

H2. Individuals who have purchased the advertised brand and viewed the self-comparative advertisement exhibit lower levels of trust than: (a) those who have purchased the competing alternative and view the competitive comparison advertisement; and (b) those who have not yet purchased and view any of the three advertisements.

H3. Consideration of advertised brand and purchase intent will be higher for individuals who have purchased the competing brand and are seeing the competitive comparison advertisement than for those who have recently purchased the advertised brand and who view the self-comparison advertisement.

EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

Respondents
A total of 132 introductory marketing students at a large North American university participated subjects participated in the study. Of those surveys completed, 128 were complete and useable.

Experimental Design
This study is based on a 3 X 3 full factorial design, manipulating previous purchase and the type of print advertisement viewed. Respondents were presented with one of three purchase scenarios (interested in making a purchase within the product category, recently purchased the product offered by the competitor, and recently purchased a product offered by the advertiser) and one of three advertisements (noncomparative, comparative, and self-comparative). Some conditions in this full factorial were not employed as they were considered not appropriate.

Bearing in mind that individuals see the scenario moments before seeing the advertised brand, individuals who have recently made purchases are able to easily make the comparison when presented with what is ostensibly a noncomparative (i.e., single product ad—de facto making it a comparative advertisement. Similarly, if an individual had just purchased the competing product, seeing it described as the advertised brand would lead to questions regarding the validity of the experimental task (i.e., the person would in essence be saying, “they just said this was for the competitor…now they say it is for the advertised brand). In the same way, if a person had viewed the scenario where they had recently purchased the advertised brand, seeing it described as the competing brand would have been confusing. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of the 5 conditions (see Figure 1 for a diagram of the conditions used).

Experimental Stimuli
Scenarios. Prior to viewing their randomly distributed advertisement, subjects were presented with one of three scenarios and instructed to imagine themselves in that situation. The three scenarios were (1) had not yet purchased a cell phone and plan but interested in doing so; (2) recently signed up for a plan and purchased a phone from the competitor—Verizon; and, (3) recently signed up for a plan and purchased a phone from the advertiser—Qwest. As an example, subjects in the third scenario were presented with a picture and description of the phone they purchased and the following text:

“After purchasing your new cell phone from Qwest you are flipping through the newspaper and an advertisement catches your attention. The advertisement is for cell phones and it contains a picture of a cell phone similar to the one that you purchased, along with information regarding a calling plan. After taking a moment to look at the advertisement you realize that the advertisement is not for your cell phone per se but rather it is for an upgraded phone and a new plan. The promoted phone and plan is offered by Qwest, the same company that you bought your phone and plan from.”

In the self-comparison scenario, the brand name of company from whom the phone and plan was purchased was the same as the advertiser.

Advertisements. Subjects viewed one of three randomly assigned print advertisements. The self-comparative advertisement included a picture of the new phone on offer with new features highlighted, a picture of the previous phone offered, and a table documenting the differences between the new plan and the old plan available (see Figure 2). The other-comparative ad was identical to the self-comparative advertisement apart from wording that was changed to reflect Verizon as the company to whom the new phone and plan were compared. The non-comparative advertisement only included the phone and plan features for the new offering.

Dependent Variables. The survey contained a range of measures regarding affective reactions, actual cell phone use, and demographics. Only those measures relevant to the hypotheses presented are reported here.
The company was evaluated based on the extent to which they following trust characteristics were believed to be true (1=Not At All, 7=To a Great Extent): Loyal to Customers, Respectful, Fair, Trustworthy, Customer-Oriented, Responsible, and Truthful. The same scale was also used in order to assess the extent to which seeing the ad would compel the individual to consider adopting the advertised brand in the future (Brand Consideration); and, the likelihood of adopting the advertised brand in the future (Future Purchase Intent).

Procedure
Sessions were run in small groups. Subjects were informed that they were to examine a print advertisement as part of a study to evaluate advertising effectiveness. After written consent was obtained, subjects were presented with handouts containing randomly distributed purchase scenarios and advertisements. After first being instructed not to return to any page after completing it, subjects read the scenario they were assigned and instructed to visually imagine the experience and the event described as if it was happening to them. They then viewed the print advertisement and then completed the provided survey. On completion, subjects were thanked, debriefed and dismissed.

Results
*Trust Scale.* The seven trust items (Loyal to Customers, Respectful, Fair, Trustworthy, Customer-Oriented, Responsible, Truthful) were all found to load on the same factor (77.2% of variance accounted for, minimum factor loading of 0.81 and Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.95). Results for dependent measures, by condition are reported in Table 1. As per the predictions of H2, for individuals who had recently purchased the phone and rate plan condition are reported in Table 1. As per the predictions of H2, for individuals who had recently purchased the phone and rate plan condition are reported in Table 1. As per the predictions of H2, for individuals who had recently purchased the phone and rate plan condition are reported in Table 1. As per the predictions of H2, for individuals who had recently purchased the phone and rate plan condition are reported in Table 1. As per the predictions of H2, for individuals who had recently purchased the phone and rate plan condition are reported in Table 1. As per the predictions of H2, for individuals who had recently purchased the phone and rate plan condition are reported in Table 1. As per the predictions of H2, for individuals who had recently purchased the phone and rate plan condition are reported in Table 1. As per the predictions of H2, for individuals who had recently purchased the phone and rate plan condition are reported in Table 1. As per the predictions of H2, for individuals who had recently purchased the phone and rate plan condition are reported in Table 1. As per the predictions of H2, for individuals who had recently purchased the phone and rate plan condition are reported in Table 1. As per the predictions of H2, for individuals who had recently purchased the phone and rate plan condition are reported in Table 1. As per the predictions of H2, for individuals who had recently purchased the phone and rate plan was higher in the Competitive–Comparison condition than for the Non–Comparison Ad Condition (t52=2.91, p<0.01) and the Self–Comparison Condition (t46=3.41, p<0.001). This supports H1. No difference was present between the Non-Comparison Ad Condition and the Self-Comparison Ad Condition (t46=0.14, p<0.001).

Supportive of H3, individuals who had recently purchased the competitor’s product and who saw the Competitive–Comparison Ad possessed a higher brand consideration value than those who had recently purchased the advertised brand and who viewed the Self–Comparison Ad (t51=3.59, p<0.001).

*Future Purchase Intent.* For conditions where the scenario indicated that no purchase had occurred, H1 is supported, with higher future purchase intent present in the Competitive–Comparison condition than in the Non–Comparison Ad Condition (t52=3.62, p<0.001) and the Self–Comparison Condition (t46=3.75, p<0.001). No statistically significant difference was present between the Non-Comparison Ad Condition and the Self-Comparison Ad Condition (t46=0.63, n.s.).

Participants who had recently purchased the competitor’s product and who saw the Competitive–Comparison Ad indicated a higher future purchase intent than those who had recently purchased the advertised brand and who viewed the Self–Comparison Ad (t51=3.32, p<0.05). This supports H3.

**DISCUSSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH**
This research presents the first examination of self-comparative advertising. Results indicate that when a person has not yet made a purchase, the competitive comparison advertisement will be more effective at evoking brand consideration and future purchase intent than either a non-comparative advertisement or a self-comparative advertisement. Of interest, even for people who have purchased the competing product, their brand consideration and likelihood of purchase will be greater when they see the competitive comparison advertisement relative to those who recently purchased the advertised brand and see the self-comparative advertisement. Note, in both of these conditions individuals are shown an ad that makes them realize that their recently purchased product is inferior. However, those who have recently purchased the competing brand are left with the elevated impression that they should purchase the advertised brand next time. Conversely, those who have recently purchased the competing brand and who viewed the Self-Comparison Ad would be inclined to consider adopting the advertised brand next time.
purchased the advertised brand and who see the self-comparative ad are left with decreased trust—in essence, betrayal.

To this point, a number of potential pitfalls with self-comparative advertising have been observed. While this provides a good cautionary instruction to advertisers who may wish to employ this execution strategy, additional work is needed to identify when self-comparative advertising may be beneficial. An additional study is required that manipulates the level of upgrade possible (e.g., providing for free upgrade to new model and plan by contacting customer service). Such a possibility may enhance the level of trust, as well as brand consideration and purchase intention for recent purchasers of the advertised product, relative to the condition where the constraint is not present. It is likely that this effect will be less pronounced for those who have purchased the competing brand as they are not able to capitalize on this upgrade capability. In additional to examining the upgrade, the length of time since purchase could also be provided to examine a likely moderating effect (e.g., if the previous product was purchased 3 years ago the sense of betrayal is likely far less than if it was purchased 3 days ago).
TABLE 1
Results from Experiment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nonpurchase Scenario &amp; Non-Comparative Ad</th>
<th>Nonpurchase Scenario &amp; Competitive-Comparative Ad</th>
<th>Nonpurchase Scenario &amp; Self-Comparative Ad</th>
<th>Competitor Purchase Scenario &amp; Competitive-Comparative Ad</th>
<th>Advertised Brand Purchase Scenario &amp; Self-Comparative Ad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust Scale</td>
<td>4.51 (0.94)*</td>
<td>4.61 (1.62)</td>
<td>4.48 (1.11)</td>
<td>4.35 (0.96)</td>
<td>2.53 (1.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Consideration</td>
<td>4.30 (1.73)</td>
<td>5.48 (1.22)</td>
<td>4.00 (1.52)</td>
<td>5.92 (0.98)</td>
<td>4.59 (1.80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Purchase Intent</td>
<td>3.56 (1.63)</td>
<td>5.04 (1.37)</td>
<td>3.62 (1.50)</td>
<td>5.65 (1.29)</td>
<td>4.11 (1.78)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The standard deviation for each condition is reported in parentheses.

A number of other constraints exist. This study employed scenarios. While this provided control during an exploratory phase of research regarding self-comparative advertising, a more realistic context (i.e., where they actually just made a choice) would result in increased mundane realism. Another caveat to this research is that it employed a product class that was fairly widely used among the respondents (93% of respondents reported owning a cell phone with the average time of ownership being slightly more than 34 months). Although an effect was observed for the use of the competitive comparison advertisement, based on previous research (Sujan and Dekleva 1987) it is believed that this effect would be even greater for a product class that was less familiar to respondents. Additionally, both Qwest and Verizon are American companies that do not operate in Canada. Previous research (Gorn and Weinberg 1984, Grewal et al. 1997) suggests that the effect of a competitive comparison advertisement is strongest when a lesser-known brand is compared to a well known brand. Stronger results would have been expected had the study employed this condition.

REFERENCES
The Senior Taboo? Age Based Sales Promotions, Self-Perceived Age and the Older Consumer
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The Older Consumer Market
Analysis of world population statistics reveals increases in older adults and accompanying declines in the number of younger people that is unprecedented in human history, and which will result in the old outnumbering the young by 2050. In the developed world, older adults are healthier and wealthier than previous generations and are willing to spend. Thus, in terms of sheer size, longevity of demand, and potential profitability the older consumer market is an increasingly important one. Despite this importance, outside the USA there still exists a relative paucity of empirical evidence that can be used to guide practical marketing strategies. This paper aims to fill a small but important gap in terms of sales promotions aimed at older adults.

Senior Promotions and Self-Perceived Age
The small number of previous studies, all American, that have investigated senior promotions or discounts have found that relatively large numbers of older consumers do not use such promotions. Possible reasons include socio-demographics, health status, or the type of marketing used. One study (Tepper 1994) however, found that negative associations with age, found in Western culture, might be the underlying reasons for non-use of such promotions. On this basis, the current study considers that self-perceived age may be an important underlying variable in the consumer behaviours toward age-based promotions among older adults. Indeed, because the number of years lived is a poor indicator of a person’s values and attitudes (Chua, Cote and Leong 1990), self-perceived age may give a more useful insight into the behaviour of older adults than can chronological age alone.

Method
Age-based quota sampling was employed, resulting in a sample of 650 adults aged 50-79, which mirrors the UK older population in terms of 5-year age bands. Usage and usage intentions toward age-based sales promotions were measured by questions pertaining to actual usage of senior discounts, interest in owning an age-based discount card, and usage likelihood. To better understand the underlying reasons for responses, an open-ended question asking respondents to explain their answers was included. Two methods of self-perceived age, age identity (originally designed by Cavan et al. in 1949 and now used extensively in gerontology studies) and cognitive age (designed by Barak and Schiffman in 1981 and now used extensively in marketing) were measured, in addition to respondents stating their actual age and income.

Results
The reliability of the cognitive age scale was found to be acceptable (Cronbach’s alpha .89). Respondents’ mean cognitive age was almost 10 years younger than their actual age. Additionally, the majority of people rejected the status old, with almost 70% stating that they perceived themselves as ‘middle-aged’, and 17% choosing to describe themselves as ‘young’.

In terms of actual consumption of senior discounts, analysis revealed a very highly significant and positive correlation with chronological age (tau-b=.285, n=638, p<0.001), indicating that as age increases, so too is the likelihood of taking advantage of senior promotions. No such relationship was found with cognitive age, although in terms of age identity, significant differences were found (X^2=15.2, df=2, p<0.001), with those who consider themselves old being the highest users, and those who perceive themselves to be young the lowest. This association with chronological age remained even when income was held constant (r=.31, n=571, p<0.001), indicating that age does play a part in the use of senior promotions.

In contrast, the remaining measures demonstrated a different, but consistent pattern. The younger and older age groups, in terms of all three types of age, were significantly less likely to use, or to be interested in, senior promotions than were the middle group. Thus, those whose actual age was in the 60s, who tended to have cognitive ages in the 50s or 60s, and who perceived themselves to be ‘middle-aged’ demonstrated the most positive attitudes toward senior promotions. Indeed, the younger and older groups demonstrated very similar levels of interest and usage intent. Analysis of the qualitative data revealed two very different underlying reasons for these findings. On the one hand, the oldest consumers were sceptical and mistrustful of such discounts, viewing them either as a ploy to encourage debt, or were fearful of being bombarded with direct mail should they take advantage of such discounts. In contrast, the youngest group rejected senior discounts on the basis that they did not yet feel old enough to qualify for such promotions. For these relatively young consumers with young self-perceived ages, consumption of senior promotions was incongruent with their youthful self-image.

Conclusions
This research has clearly demonstrated that the relationship between actual and intended usage of age-related discounts and different age measures is a complex one. Of the three groups of older consumers in terms of feelings toward senior discounts, the group that is the most positive is the middle-aged segment, both chronologically and cognitively, and these have middle-aged age identities. This group welcomes senior promotions, and views them as rewards. For this group, then, positioning such discounts on the basis of loyalty and rewards is a viable strategy. In contrast, the youngest and oldest groups have similar, relatively negative, feelings toward age-based promotions, but for different underlying reasons. The oldest group show mistrust, whilst the youngest group are not yet ready to accept that they qualify for offers on the basis of their old age. For the older group, then, there is a need to provide more information and education, and to provide reassurances that there is no catch, and they have a choice as to whether or not they receive mailings for other promotions. The youngest group, though old enough to qualify in terms of actual age, do not yet feel old enough to use senior discounts, and thus targeting these consumers with age-based discounts is not a viable strategy. Instead, positioning promotions on the basis of loyalty rewards, or off-peak discounts, may be the only way to reach these youthful seniors.

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The Moderating Roles of Product Category Types and Need for Cognition on the Attitudes toward Comparative Advertising

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Despite the common use of comparative advertising, its effectiveness is equivocal, mixed, or even conflicting (Donthu 1992). These discrepancies suggest that more research is needed to examine the moderating factors of comparative advertising effectiveness. This study proposes two of such factors: a product category type (hedonic vs. utilitarian) and need for cognition (Cacioppo and Petty 1982).

Theoretical Framework

Product category type and attitude towards comparative advertising

Utilitarian products (e.g., cold remedy and textbooks) are viewed as more practical, instrumental and associated with necessary function in life. Hedonic products (e.g., designer clothes and ice-cream) are associated with pleasure-oriented, fun, and experiential consumption (Chernev 2004). In general, comparative (CP) ads compare the advertised brand with competitive brands attribute by attribute. This comparison style should encourage analytical thinking and lend itself better to rationale thinking which is more consistent with the characteristic of utilitarian products that focus on the usefulness or functionality of the product attributes.

Noncomparative (NC) ads, on the other hand, are not likely to encourage analytical or piecemeal processing. Ad audience may use holistic processing which is more consistent with the nature of hedonic products which are primarily concerned with global or experiential pleasure. Consumers may form an overall consumption image rather than focusing on each attribute of the product. So CP ads which encourage analytic information processing are more likely to be less effective for hedonic products which elicit global consumption experience. Based on the foregoing discussions, we hypothesize:

H1a: For a utilitarian product, CP (vs. NC) ads will elicit more favorable ad attitude.
H1b: For a hedonic product, NC (vs. CP) ads will elicit more favorable ad attitude.

Need for cognition and attitude toward comparative advertising

Need for cognition (NFC) refers to the tendency to engage in and enjoy effortful thinking (Cacioppo and Petty 1982). Individuals high in NFC intrinsically enjoy thinking while those low in NFC try to avoid effortful cognitive tasks. Because high (vs. low) NFC consumers have an intrinsic motivation to process information in a relatively more effortful manner and CP ads provide consumers with more factual information which presumably helps them to make rational brand choices (Wilkie and Farris, 1975), it is thus expected that the effectiveness of CP (vs. NC) will be more pronounced in high (vs. low) NFC consumers.

Nevertheless, it is likely that the moderating effect of NFC will be observed primarily with utilitarian (vs. hedonic) products. For utilitarian products, consumers are likely to exert cognitive effort to process the ad information and examine the product’s ability to perform a specific function. In contrast, for hedonic products which often stimulate the sensory or affective responses, consumers are not likely to cognitively process CP ad information to assess the affective consumption experience. Literature also suggests that need for cognition increases the likelihood of attribute-based (which is more consistent to the consumption of utilitarian products) versus attitude-based processing (which is more consistent to consumption of hedonic products) (Mantel and Kardes, 1999).

Based on the foregoing discussions, we hypothesize:

H2a: For utilitarian products, CP (vs. NC) ads will elicit more favorable ad attitude primarily for consumers with high (vs. low) NFC.
H2b: For hedonic products, the impact of NFC will be attenuated.

Methodology

An experimental study was conducted with two hundred and four undergraduate students. The subjects were first given a basic description of the study and viewed either a CP or NC ad for the first product and responded to measures of ad attitudes (drawn from Neese and Taylor, 1994). Next, the subjects read the ad of the second product and completed the same measures as those for the first ad. The ad types for the first and second products are always different. The subjects then were asked to complete the NFC scale (Cacioppo, Petty and Kao, 1984). Finally, after providing basic demographic data, subjects were debriefed.

Toothpaste and candy were selected as the focal utilitarian and hedonic products based on a pre-test. The two print ads (CP and NC ads) for each product category type contained the same information, except that CP ads also indicated that the sponsoring brand was better on each attribute than the leading brand.

Results

The two research hypotheses were examined using factorial ANOVA where ad format (CP vs. NC) and NFC (low vs. high) were independent variables and ad attitudes as a dependent variable. An ANOVA model was run for each product category type (utilitarian and hedonic).

Hypothesis testing

For a utilitarian product, the main effect of ad type (CP vs. NC) is significant. A CP (vs. NC) ad elicits more favorable ad attitudes.

For a hedonic product, the main effect of ad type (CP vs. NC) is marginally significant. A NC (vs. CP) ad elicits more favorable ad attitudes.

The interaction effect of ad type X NFC is significant for a utilitarian product but not for a hedonic product. Specifically, for a utilitarian product, CP (vs. NC) ads elicit more favorable ad attitudes for consumers with high NFC. For consumers with low NFC, however, the two ad types produce similar level of ad attitudes.

For a hedonic product, the lack of significant interaction effect of ad type X NFC suggests that, for hedonic products, the impact of NFC is attenuated.

Discussions

Overall, the results reveal the boundary of CP versus NC ad persuasiveness set by product category types (utilitarian vs. hedonic) and level of consumer’s need for cognition.
Our study suggests that marketers may consider using CP ads primarily when their products are utilitarian as opposed to hedonic. Nevertheless, when the product is hedonic in nature, NC ads could be more suitable. Furthermore, to advertise utilitarian products, marketers may consider to use CP ads especially when the target market are high NFC consumers or when the purchase situation encourages more elaborative information processing.

Our study has certain limitations which suggest avenues for future research. First, in addition to ad attitudes, future studies should include other ad effectiveness measures such as ad recalls and purchase intention. Second, the focus of this study was print ads. Other media including television and radio commercials are worth investigating as well. Finally, only indirect comparative ads were examined due to legal constraints, future research may need to verify our findings with direct comparative ad.

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SESSION SUMMARY

This session aims to stimulate debate and research development by providing three contrasting perspectives on contemporary creativity and the emerging role of consumers in interpreting, socializing, and even completing creative acts. Consumers are triggering traditional boundaries of creativity, by stretching its application domains and making creativity a diffusely relational construct. Consistent with this boundary stretching, consumers are playing active roles in street art reconstruction of social identities of public spaces, as well as substituting as content providers in cyber networks through open source software communities. Evidence also shows consumers’ manipulation of fashion products by means of creative exploitation of fakes. In other words, interpretation, symbolic elaboration and innovation are not only part of production, but acquire even greater emphasis as part of consumption stages and contribute to the affirmation of what Paul Willis addresses as “Common Culture” (1990). Thus, the lines between and roles in production and consumption are becoming more blurred as consumers creatively alter, interpret and give meaning to products and experiences. And this interaction process continues as these new output are then consumed and produced by other consumers. So, there is a continuous dialogical creative process and evolution. In fact, if artists are typically celebrated for the leading role they play in innovating and bringing their arts to market, the after life of creative objects is definitely under-explored.

Dialogical creativity represents a complementary lens in the understanding of market dynamics around the production and consumption of creative artifacts in socially complex and multifaceted environments. Through this framework, in fact, authors of this special session aim at contrasting the historically dominant approach to creativity, which polarizes attention over the moment of creation and leaves creative opera as creations of their second parent: the consumer. This raises questions about the traditional definitions and roles of producer and consumer as consumers take increasingly creative roles in “producing” products and experiences.

Elaborating on Willis findings (1990), the dialogical dimension of creativity calls to action the consumers who, at least, contribute to the transformation of artistic contents in three ways:

1. through interpretation. “What has been forgotten is that circumstances change cases, contexts change texts. The received view of aesthetics suggests that the aesthetic effect is internal to the text, and a universal property of its form. […] We want to explore how far grounded aesthetics are part, not of things, but of processes involving consumption, processes which make consumption pleasurable and vital” (Willis 1990: 20). Consumers are actually part of a process of cultural production, as far as they provide original meanings and participate to metabolizing and transferring those meanings;

2. through individual identity construction and negotiation. Consumers also take part to a process of selection and appropriation of creative artifacts, which are fundamental levers in constructing and socializing individual identity. “Being human–human be-in-ness–means to be creative in the sense of remaking the world for ourselves as we make and find our place and identity” (1990: 11);

3. thorough sharing and tribalization. Finally, if individual identity construction represents a process that, far from excluding dynamics of socialization, still is mainly focused on the individual self (ego-centered processes), consumers of creative artifacts can also be engaged in the elaboration of contents they wish to share with anonymous others or members of subcultural tribes (etero-directed processes).

The general orientation of the session is interpretive, in bringing together papers dealing with street art movements, fashion products (both original and fakes), and internet open source sites. These works, which cover different domains in arts and creativity, present common file rouge in framing creativity as dialogical dynamics of producers and consumers of creative artifacts, to the point their pretended distinctive roles tend to vanish and shadow one into the other.

In detail, the first paper addresses the appropriation of public spaces by street artists, and questions the role played by citizens as consumers of street arts, arguing the impact played on the completion of those works and the modification of their meanings. The second contribution refers to the “post-original” phase of fashion innovation, and enlightens how fakes can be deployed both by producers and consumers as an ongoing critique to original fashion products. Finally, the third paper examines, overviews, and then offers a typology the different types of creative activity and actors that exist on the Internet. Building upon this categorization and interpretation of online creativity (currently commonly glossed in the media as “Web 2.0”), the presenters offer theoretical understandings about creativity, consumption, and production, and also about online consumer communities and what they actually do.

In this light, current session is devoted to consumer behavior researchers interested in innovation, creativity and postmodern consumption. In addition, this work should appeal to consumers themselves, whose agency is more fully recognized and empirically explored through extensive investigation in various contexts that combine fashion market, public spaces, and virtual places.

ABSTRACTS

“Use of Public Spaces as Creative Acts. Phenomenology of Street Art in a Cross-Cultural Perspective” Stefania Borghini, Luca M. Visconti, Laurel Anderson, John F. Sherry Jr

Contemporary forms of street art in Europe and US are reshaping the ways of experiencing and consuming public spaces of the past decades.

Almost waiving any narcissistic attempt to affirm their identity or, simply, to protest against a certain established social order, modern street artists are changing the aims of their creative products and acts. Recognizing the social ecology, their creative responses are developed within the context of the commercialization of public space and their consumption of this public space. Thus these street artists are both consumers of the public space and producers in a continuing process of creative symbolization. In order to address a consciousness of sense of place and, most of all, a renovated awareness of the role of arts and emotions in ordinary life, they are moving toward new forms of creativity that bring a strong sense of gift-giving and altruism.
Respecting the beauty and adorning the dull and ugly corners of modern towns, they establish new ways of communication with citizens—consumers, and re-enchant the value of “poor art”, such as poetry and graffiti. Their efforts encapsulate and even overcome the value of symbolic creativity and grounded aesthetics (Willis, 1990). Their creative acts are efforts to make the consumption of art readily available to all.

Through an extended ethnography based on participant observation, in-depth interviews and internet observations, our study analyzes the multiple forms of creativity and messages that street artists are developing in several cities in particular: Milan, San Francisco, London, Phoenix, and Dublin. The internet observations extend these observations to many other sites.

Our data show a rich and complex network of practices that are arising all over the world. The analysis and discussion of findings allow us to unpack the nature and the meanings ascribed to different forms of creative acts performed by these artists:

a) Tag, a reply of the original practices of street art born in New York in the Seventies. It consists in painting nicknames or other words of rebellion. Public space is used to protest against the ugliness of social world;

b) Writing, a pure practice of exercise related to the need of self-affirmation and communication within the community of peers; the aim is to paint nicknames achieving bigger and more beautiful forms through incremental progress and innovation;

c) Sticking, the practice of sticking and spreading drawings and symbols in public spaces; it influences the way consumers can use public space in order to communicate with their audience;

d) Stencil, the replication of the same form or symbol in multiple places. The meaning of the act is related to its diffusion. The value of this personal “logo” can be known and recognized only with high replication. This logic has a high resonance with marketing practices of advertising and branding;

e) Poetic assault, the emerging practice of writing poetry on public spaces (walls, parapets, rolling shutters, mailboxes, and any other space that can be considered anonymous, ugly or dull) and giving it to the neighborhood, to the people walking in the streets, to students, workers and so on;

f) Urban design, a system of several spontaneous street art projects with the aim of improving the aesthetics of the architecture of public spaces or parts of the urban design.

We found that the existing creative acts can be classified into several categories and dichotomies: singular/collective, self-affirmative/altruistic, critical/celebrating, protest/aesthetics.

In these complex webs of meanings and intents, some specific forms of street art (i.e., poetic assault and urban design) are strongly reshaping the way street art has been practiced up to now. A sense of altruism and critical thinking are 1) transforming the consumption of public space and 2) celebrating new ways of consumption.

Fighting against a common view of interpreting public spaces as “no places”: street artists are trying to communicate to their communities and through continuing the creativity process, produce a renovated sense of place based on shared experiences, values and, most of all, on the sense of beauty and the respect towards forms of art like painting or poetry.

Despite the variety of aims and practices, an interesting trend is emerging: the attempt to communicate about life, emotions, common utopias and the essence of things through a creative gift. According to the rules of some groups of street artists, creative acts are anonymous and cannot have a signature. There are no copyrights for the artists. But consumer response is stimulated through posts on their websites, positive comments from passers-by, and a rising interest in this creative use of public spaces.

This approach toward forms of “humane creativity” (Aleinikov, 1999) is strictly intertwined with the consumption practices of the artists. Encouraged by the initial positive feedback and reactions from consumers and local media, some groups are investing in new forms of communications and encouraging new forms of consumption. They are criticizing marketers’ strategies by applying practices and languages of marketing and advertising. De-constructing official brand logos, packaging, and labels, they work in order to inform consumers about the meanings and consequences of marketing practices. Without a specific deliberate attempt to protest against the market, they prefer to work in order to help consumers to be aware of their consumption acts and choices.

Looking for almost unintended consequences of their creative acts, some artists are adopting a “waiving” attitude. In the name of a shared renovated awareness of the role and potential of public spaces, they accept the loss of control over their creative acts and the role of anonymous artists in order to increase the interest in the consumption of aesthetics, beauty and poetry within their towns.

The contribution of this study is twofold. First, it highlights contemporary creative practices that are shaping consumption patterns, relationships with brands and the marketplace. A new ecology of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988) thus emerges when we consider the impact on consumption. Secondly, it identifies new ways of production and consumption of public spaces that are transforming the sense of place and collective identities (e.g., Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977; Giddens 1991; Augé 1995; Thrift, 1997).

“Innovation, Creativity and the Post-Origin: Reproduction and Knock-offs in the Luxury Sector”

Jamy Annamma Joy

Innovation in the marketing and consumer literature is often presented as a break with the past—a moment of creating the new. This is particularly the case in discussions of totally new to the world products or discontinuous innovations. There is an assumption here that the original is a non–controversial value creating event. Anything that happens after is seen as a post-event activity. Value is thus positioned as an eternal object. In intellectual property debates for instance, the creative moment is seen as the main value producing moment and all else that happens after as mere repetition or reproduction. Even in circumstances where innovation is described as process, novelty is not critically examined. In that sense then, both innovation and innovation management essentialize “originality” and oversimplify the origin of value in the “original.” In the fashion industry the concept of innovation and originality is particularly interesting since fashion by definition changes constantly.

In this paper we extend Rehn and Vacchani’s (2006) idea of the “post-origin” in the examination of fakes and reproductions of luxury goods. We argue that a consideration of the after life of products through its transformation as fakes or reproductions allows us to reflect on what constitutes innovation in the first place. Fakes and reproductions can be seen as the “other” in the definition of the original and calls into question the idea of permanence associated with the original. The effort to call something an innovation—moralizing on its newness and originality—is also an attempt to negate the “other.”

This discussion of the original and fake becomes even more critical in the context of the digital economy where it is all about multiple originals /copying with little cost and effort. There is no
distinction between originals and copies. In pre-digital contexts on the other hand, a copy does not have the cache of the original and is seen as an inferior re-casting of the original. The idea of the “post-original” is an attempt to get away from such thinking. It questions the assumptions of the eternal object/event and introduces the idea of impermanence and uncertainty into the notion of the original.

Walter Benjamin (c.f. Benjamin 1968, Buck-Morss 1989) is perhaps the most prolific source on the concept of the original and copy and argues that emergent creativity can be understood in the after life of products—the ways in which things acquire meaning. Innovation must be interrupted in order to become meaningful. He explains this further through the idea of ruination, remembrance and redemption. Once an object is incorporated into a person’s life, it becomes stripped of its ideology and is in a sense un-masked; the term ruination is used to explain this process. Remembrance is the process of memory creation through use and elaboration of meaning. It is in remembrance [mental recasting] that we find the object’s after life—the commercialization of the innovation. It is also through this process that ruination happens—what is forgotten about the object can be brought back in memory and re-examined. In this process the “other” can be re-thought and re-cast as an ongoing critique of the original. The reality of innovation is not in the process of creation so much as in its after life. There is little value in searching for the primal meaning or essentializing specific moments of creation. Instead Benjamin argues for a dialectic engagement with the life of the object where there is no final point nor any point that deserves more attention than another.

In the examination of fakes and reproductions we are doing precisely this—looking at the after life of an object in order to understand the ontology of innovation itself. According to Baumol (2002) an innovation is an invention brought to market. But this is too simplistic. Markets are not homogenous and what works in one might not work in another. If we were to re-think the role of the “original” in terms of particular contexts, we can understand the importance of fakes and reproductions in developing new paths that the after life of the original takes. In the process we bring to the fore the problems of moralization that accompany the taken-for-granted assumptions associated with the “original.”

“Creative Consumers in Online Consumers Networks:
Exploration of Theoretical Implications”
Robert V. Kozinets and Andrea Hemetsberger

Much creativity research is cognitive psychological and focuses on the individual level of analysis. However, a considerable amount of consumer creativity is transpiring through interactions of networks of consumers as they communicate visually and textually, share community and forge culture. This research examines the concept of creativity through an analysis of the collaborative, collective efforts of consumers working together online. In the process, it seeks to both extend and complicate notions of “consumers,” “consumption,” “creation” and “production” by demonstrating some of the ways creative acts are inherent in online “consumption” activities. It also contributes to our burgeoning understanding of online communities and their role as “consumption” communities. Finally, this presentation contributes to current understanding by offering an initial typology for understanding the various kinds of consumer creativity present online.

Consumer creativity is by no means a new phenomenon. Moreau and Dahl (2005) note that innovative consumer behavior is actually an integral part in the daily life of every consumer, not a rare activity. Yet, until recently consumer researchers have hardly ventured into this aspect of consumption or prospection (Moreau and Dahl 2005). Moreover, even recent investigations into consumer creativity have neglected the collaborative side of creative consumer cultures and its implications for altering both marketing theory and managerial practice (e.g., Burroughs and Mick 2004). While management scholars emphasize the enormous innovative potential of online communities for new product development (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004; von Hippel 2005), new insights that theorize the implications of networked creativity are still in their nascent form. In recent research, (Hargadon and Bechky 2006) emphasize a key point: collective creativity takes on a quality distinct from individual creativity. The rise of particular kinds of online creativity reflects an important qualitative shift in the nature of the creative process.

Online consumer creativity is clearly still under researched. In this presentation, we assert that the creativity and productivity of consumers online is exceptional and is beginning to offer major managerial challenges and opportunities that deserve further theorization. Online, consumers are writing and sharing their texts, distributing their various podcasts and vlogs, programming and debugging software together, editing and altering commercial mass culture, creating news, parodies, and satire. Together, consumers are creating sophisticated work—the outcome of an aggregation of collective expertise that is difficult to match elsewhere (Bagozzi and Dholakia 2002; Cova, Kozinets and Shakar 2007; Kozinets 2006).

Our central contribution to this discussion is to offer a typology of online creativity behavior that encompasses the full range of “consumer” activity. We are still in the data collection stage and this preliminary framework will be subject to considerable modification prior and probably subsequent to the presentation. We separate out two important dimensions of online consumer creativity. First, we consider the regularity of the contribution: is the creative contribution something that occurs irregularly and with generally low frequency, or is it something that occurs often, in a fairly regular or even permanent-seeming format? The other dimension is collaboration. In this we consider whether the creative contribution occurs with a high level of collaboration between consumers, or whether it is generally the work of only one or a few consumers using only minimal feedback from one another and from the greater communities to which they seek to contribute.

At the base level we consider those with only sporadic contribution and with a low element of collaboration. These “Sidekicks” are generally those who would post, comment upon, or add feedback to an already created work such as a message threat, posting, or blog. At the next level are those who create content for other on the Internet on a semi-regular or dependably regular basis. For these “Sources,” collaboration is generally limited to a collaborative posting, perhaps inviting some general feedback from readers in response. Much online creativity falls into this category, which would include most bloggers and many vloggers. Next, we consider those project groups who gather together for particular projects, such as publishing a zine, creating a video, debugging a program, or erecting a particular web-site. These “Project Mobs” are purpose- and possess high collaborativeness but low-moderate regularity. At the fullest level of creativity contribution are consumers who gather into organized semi-permanent collectives, which we term “Hives.” These “consumers” are industrious, diligent, and regular, and would include groups such as ongoing Open Source software communities, local Star Trek episode production groups, vlog and podcast production teams, and so on. These Hives have very interesting implications for business and marketing that have begun to be recognized in theorizations of “entrepreneurial consumer tribes” (Cova, Kozinets, and Shakar 2007).

Our typology and theorization link to organizational network theory and suggest that we cease theorizing particular kinds of online consumer creation as a type of leisure activity or a play-
ground for unsatisfied and bored individuals. Very much in the tradition of the medieval craft guilds, creative online communities contain masters, apprentices, and journeymen. Expertise is an essential prerequisite for creativity and therefore highly supported in the guild-like “Project Mob.” Internet technology provides uncountable opportunities to provide information, tutorials, and build up platforms for knowledge exchange and file sharing. In few other places can John Doe simply ask a prominent expert for help and get a near-instant answer, or invitation to join in. The guild system also provided customers with some assurance of quality, because guild members would engage in evaluating each other’s products. Online creative artwork is constantly challenged by evaluations from peers and from the public in an attempt to produce top quality work. Creative online cultures therefore establish peer reviewing systems (as is the case with the Open Source Software movement and its communities). The peer reviewing system combines a source of institutional power with a caring oeuvre. It is an aspect of socialization that underpins Hives and Project Mobs, and perhaps brings Sources together into leadership positions within these social forms.

In further examination, we consider the role of “the three Rs”: Relationships, Rules, and the Re-aesthetization and re-enchantment of creative “work,” and the implications of these altered understandings for our theories of consumers, communities, and creativity.

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People Who Bought This Also Bought That
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In e-stores such as Amazon.com, someone contemplating any product can be directed to recommendations from users who have bought this product. Such recommendations do not necessarily refer to the product category originally contemplated. Do people think they will like products someone else bought just because this other person likes some unrelated product they themselves like? We propose that the answer to this question is yes. We present a phenomenon we call similarity extrapolation—the psychological transfer of similarity in preferences between self and others from a specific, yet arbitrary, domain to unrelated domains.

We propose that, in the comparison of another person’s preferences with self preferences, people categorize the other in relation to the self, and this categorization serves as a basis for future inferences about the other person. This process is called categorical inference. People form impressions of new individuals based on an active categorization process (Brewer 1988). Moreover, as people often interpret information about others according to its congruency with the self (Gramzow et al. 2001), it is likely that the categorization occurs as a function of how similar to the self individuals are perceived to be. Once categorization takes place, additional attributes of individuals will be inferred (Brewer 1988) according to how individuals fit in the category. In similarity extrapolation, the fit would determine a graded structure leading to an increasing trend that relates degree of similarity in a domain and people’s predicted similarity in other domains.

We explore similarity extrapolation in two studies. The first study was designed to show insensitiveness to information selection, that is, that people extrapolate similarity to the same extent from one domain to extremely different domains. In this study, participants first chose one vase in each of 20 pairs. Participants were then matched with another participant (hereafter, partner) who had preferences either similar or dissimilar from theirs for the set of vases. Subsequently, participants learned their partners’ choices for these 20 pairs of vases.

Participants were then presented pairs of stimuli in one of two selection conditions: partner (dissimilar condition) or second manipulation: partner (similar condition). After learning partners’ preferences, participants in all conditions were asked to estimate how many times in a set of 10 pairs of tourist activities they would choose the same item as their partner (predicted agreement question). Participants were then shown 10 pairs of tourist activities and asked to rate each pair on the same scale used to rate vases. Participants were also asked to predict their partners’ preferences (item-by-item prediction).

Results from the partial condition demonstrate insensitiveness to information selection, that is, we observed significant similarity extrapolation in the number of times participants chose the same tourist activity for themselves and for their partners (item-by-item): similar partner ($M=7.8, SD=2.14$) versus dissimilar partner ($M=5.2, SD=2.48, p=.001$). Participants did not predict significantly higher overall agreement for tourist activities (predicted agreement question) in the similar partner condition ($M=5.15, SD=2.43$) than in the dissimilar partner condition ($M=4.65, SD=1.53, p>.1$). In the full condition we found evidence for categorical inference. A significant linear trend contrast was obtained from agreement for vases to the predicted agreement question for tourist activities (participants were divided in four groups according to the number of times participants agreed with their partners for the three pairs of vases—denoted by the subscripts from 0 to 3: $M_0=3.14, SD_0=1.77; M_1=3.71, SD_1=2.02; M_2=4.05, SD_2=1.96; M_3=6.46, SD_3=1.81; p=.001$). A significant linear trend contrast was also obtained from agreement for vases to the item-by-item agreement ($M_0=5.71, SD_0=2.5; M_1=5.12, SD_1=2.23; M_2=6.36, SD_2=1.71; M_3=7.31, SD_3=1.93; p=.043$). These linear trends suggest categorization occurred in a graded structure such that the more similarity was perceived for vases, the more similarity was inferred for tourist activities.

We conclude with implications of similarity extrapolation for agent decision making, gift-giving, brand extensions, and online recommendations of the type “People who bought this also bought that.”

References


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Variety seeking has preoccupied many researchers in the last two decades and many explanations have been produced. Satiation with a product or its attributes is one of the many underlying causes of variety seeking which are classified as internal and external (Hoyer and Ridgway 1984; Kahn 1995; Van Trijip, Hoyer, and Inman 1996). Other than satiation, internal causes include: the inability of consumers to make the right choice (Celsi and Olson 1988; Huber and Reibstein 1979), their attempt to balance product attributes to maximize utility (Farquhar and Rao 1976), consumer’s multiple purchases for future consumption (Kahn 1995; Kahn and Lehman 1991; Simonson 1990), consumers’ attempt to simplify the shopping task, and consumers’ optimal stimulation level (Hoyer and Ridgway 1984; Orth and Bourrain 2005a; Orth 2005; Raju 1980, 1983). On the other hand, external causes include out-of-stock conditions, special offers or promotions (Kahn and Louie 1990; Trivedi and Morgan 2003; Van Trijip et al. 1996). Variety seeking is relevant to various areas in marketing such as segmentation and risk taking (e.g., Givon 1985; Orth 2005; Raju 1980; Trivedi 1999) which remain underdeveloped. In terms of segmentation, the value of identifying variety seeking clusters lies in the devising of promotional strategy since different variety seeking levels or types may require different promotional approaches. In addition, different motives or needs underlie variety seeking (e.g., change, novelty etc.) which may determine how variety seeking will be manifested (e.g., switching, innovation etc.) (Price and Ridgway 1982). In light of this, the research reported in this paper measures individuals’ optimal stimulation level (OSL) in order to derive variety seeking segments. This exploratory study approaches variety seeking as a phenomenon resulting from consumers’ internal need for stimulation (OSL). OSL is found to possess intra-individual stability due to its association with personality traits (e.g., dogmatism) which affect its scope and levels (Joachimsthaler and Lastovicka 1984; Raju 1980). Given its relatively stable nature and its potential relationship with the adoption decision process (Mittelstaedt et al. 1976) promotional strategy (Trivedi 1999) and brand choice (Orth 2005) individuals’ variety seeking, caused by OSL, represents a useful basis for clustering consumers. Optimal stimulation level was measured using an existing scale (Arousal Seeking Tendency, Mehrabian and Russell 1974) consisting of items corresponding to five sources of arousal (e.g., change, unusual stimuli, risk, sensuality and new environments) which indicate different variety seeking tendencies and manifestations (Mehrabian and Russell 1974; Price and Ridgway 1982). The data was acquired through a URL embedded questionnaire (Wilson and Laskey 2003) used for cost effectiveness and fast transmission (Kent and Brandal 2003) sent to a sample of three thousand individuals. The sample derived from the large customer database of a reputable UK-based retailer across their retail, catalog and Internet operations. Potential respondents received a URL address in the form of a hypertext link included in an e-mail message sent by the retailer. The e-mail invited recipients to visit the web page to complete the questionnaire. A pilot test preceded the main launch and a completion incentive was offered. Four hundred and sixty-two usable questionnaires were returned, representing a 15.4% response rate. Hierarchical cluster analysis was used to group respondents that exhibited similar levels of stimulation based on the 26 OSL items (measured on a scale of one: very high variety seeking tendencies to five: very low variety seeking tendencies). The analysis indicated seven distinct clusters which were then validated via ANOVA and MANOVA using F-values that were adjusted for multiplicity effects based on the Sheffe test. Results indicated significant differences which allowed the profiling of the clusters on the basis of OSL levels that reflect variety seeking tendencies (VST) (Raju 1980) and other demographic variables consisting of gender, age and education. The clusters were named on the basis of those motives (or combination thereof) which discriminate them (e.g., change, new unfamiliar stimuli, risk taking etc) and assumptions about each cluster’s exploratory behaviors were developed given the relationship of OSL with exploratory tendencies (Raju 1980; Joachimsthaler and Lastovicka 1984).

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Hedonic Perception and the Development of Competitive Market Structures in Floral Markets
Peter Oppenheim, Deakin University, Australia

ABSTRACT
In this paper the role of hedonic preferences and perceptions are explored and their contribution towards understanding the nature of the competitive forces operating between floral products within an assortment is assessed. Following a review of the competitive market structure literature, the methodology adopted in this study is outlined and the relationship between choice, the hedonic perceptions that consumers associate with floral products and various patterns of competitiveness is examined. The paper concludes by discussing the theoretical and managerial implications of this research.

INTRODUCTION
In virtually all human societies flowers have been used throughout time as symbols of nature in times of sympathy, congratulation, courtship and worship. In many societies flowers are given as gifts and used for interior decoration of homes. Over time culture specific semiotic codes have evolved around the giving and receiving of flowers. These semiotic codes are expressed colloquially in terms of the “Language of Flowers” (Goody 1993). For those familiar with the rules of this language, flower choice is easily determined as the colour, type of flower and the occasion or context all have implications for choice. In fact in recent times many florists have even provided explanatory information using the “Language of Flowers” as part of their marketing mix to assist consumers to select appropriate flowers for particular occasions.

While the Australian floricultural industry is of strategic economic importance to the Australian agricultural sector, little empirical consumer research has been reported in the past. From an industry point of view an understanding of the competitive behaviour between floral products has implications for the development of both production and marketing strategies. While from a consumer research perspective understanding the competitive forces acting within floral markets presents a number of unique challenges as the floral category involves both utilitarian and hedonic considerations. In this paper the research focus is directed towards the need to gain a better understanding of the competitive forces operating within retail assortments of floral products.

COMPETITION WITHIN ASSORTMENTS
Competition between products within a retailer’s assortment may result from a number of factors. For example, short-term price reductions, which have been shown by (Guadagni and Little 1983) to result in significant sales responses in various consumer categories. Other sources of competition between floral products might arise from intrinsic differences within assortments. Such differences as variation in the level of quality among products, the number of products on display, the variety in terms of colour or shape and finally the differential hedonic impact that various products may have on different consumers may all contribute towards the intrinsic competition that exists between floral products within an assortment.

Identifying the nature of competition and mapping the pattern of sales losses and gains is both academically and managerially important. If, ceteris paribus, price is considered as the sole source of competition and if the cross price sensitivities of two products on each other were equal, i.e. each product drew shares from the other in proportion to their market share, competition would be symmetric in nature. Empirical evidence in marketing however shows that such symmetric patterns of competition are often violated (Carpenter et al. 1988). When symmetric competition is violated asymmetric patterns of competition are said to exist.

Price and quality have frequently been identified in the marketing literature as factors contributing to asymmetric competition between brands. (Krishnamurthi et al. 1995), (Sivakumar and Raj 1997) and (Avlonitis and Indounas 2004). However, (Kim 1995) notes that price and quality are not the only variables that may contribute towards an asymmetric effect and suggests that future studies could also examine the asymmetric effect of other short run marketing variables such as advertising. In this paper, the hedonic impact that products provide is examined to determine how such perceptions might contribute towards market response. This examination of competition therefore differs from other studies in this domain because it addresses competition from a hedonic perspective in which variation in the hedonic perception of products is examined in relation to competition.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. In the next section, literature on competitive market structures is briefly reviewed to identify the approaches that have been used in previous studies to analyse patterns of competition between products. The methodology adopted in this study is then outlined and an analysis of sample buyer’s hedonic preferences and perceptions is discussed. The relationship between choice, the hedonic perceptions that consumers associate with floral products and potential patterns of competitiveness is then examined and an a priori competitive market structure is developed. Finally these results are discussed and the implications of this work are outlined.

Assessing Competitive Market Structures
A competitive market structure is defined by (DeSarbo et al. 1993) as “… a configuration of competing products/brands, which are perceived as substitutes by consumers …”. Various approaches adopted in the past to study market structures have been reviewed by (DeSarbo et al. 1993), (Cooper and Inoue 1996), (Bucklin and Srinivasan 1991), (Bucklin and Gupta 1992), (Kamakura and Russell 1989) and (Roberts and Morrison 2002) inter alios. In a succinct review of market structure analysis, (Cooper and Inoue 1996) identified five common elements that competitive market share models possess. The first element was the identification of competitive groups. This assumed that some structure existed in a market and that brands were not uniformly distributed in competitive space. In other words, the brands in the market could be represented in groups with greater competition within groups than between groups.

The second element concerned the representation of heterogeneity of consumer preferences. Two approaches may be found in the literature. First, scaling parameters of brand utility may be allowed to vary across usage situations or secondly in other models, consumer segmentation could be simultaneously incorporated. The third element identified by (Cooper and Inoue 1996) was the way in which preference was composed. In general, preference tended to be associated with total utility through brand attributes. The fourth element was asymmetry in competition. Asymmetry may be explicitly specified within the model (Cooper 1988), or calculated a posteriori via elasticities which may serve as measures of competition and indicators of market structure. The final element of
competitive market structure models was a pictorial representation to illustrate the competitive situation between brands. Competitive structures can be represented spatially with maps (Cooper 1988) or ultra-metrically by trees (Novak 1993), (Elrod and al. 2002).

The Hedonic Gap

To derive a measure of hedonic impact which incorporated both the under achievement and over achievement of the hedonic needs of consumers a modified gap analysis was used. Gap analysis, (Parasuraman et al. 1988), (Bateson and Hoffman 1999), (Klose and Finkle 1995) and (Teas 1993) inter alios, provides a measure of the perceived service quality derived from measures of consumer perceptions and consumer expectations. In a similar way, it is now proposed that a prerequisite for maximising the total utility gained from the consumption of floral products, may be defined by minimising the difference between floral consumers’ stated levels of hedonic perceptions and their stated levels of hedonic preferences. The sum of the squared differences between a measure of hedonic preference and hedonic perception will be referred to as the “hedonic gap.” The hedonic gap is therefore proposed as a measure of the amount by which a floral product fails to meet, or exceed, the mean hedonic preferences of a floral market segment. Floral products that are successful in meeting the needs of consumers could therefore have relatively small hedonic gaps and could be expected to act as competitors among themselves within any market segment. In contrast, floral products with relatively large hedonic gaps would not be expected to meet the hedonic needs of consumers nearly so well and consequently it is expected that intensive competition among these floral products would be less likely. Data required for this study were collected as part of the survey, which will be outlined in the next section. The methodology adopted to define the market structure and examine the competition between floral products within an assortment is also outlined below.

METHODOLOGY

Data for the study was collected in two stages. Stage one employed a generative approach to identify the underlying values and attitudes of floral consumers. A total of 22 depth interviews were conducted in Melbourne, Australia. Participants were invited to discuss their attitudes and feelings with respect to flowers and the purchase of flowers. Each interview was recorded and the data collected used to construct a series of attitudinal statements.

The second phase of the data collection process consisted of a comprehensive survey of flower buyers which was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved the administration of a questionnaire which contained a series of attitudinal and demographic questions as well as 99 Likert Scale items derived from the depth interviews. Respondents who completed the first stage were invited to participate in the second stage which included a probabilistic discrete choice experiment in which the price and availability of ten commercially important flowers were varied. The final sample consisted of 318 flower buyers with 209 respondents completing both parts of the survey.

In the discrete choice experiment, a flower buying scenario was read to respondents who were then presented with 9 of 35 possible choice sets. The design of the choice sets was derived from a set of efficient experimental designs (Lazari, 1994). These designs although not orthogonal did satisfy a local determinant optimality condition and were very efficient enabling both availability and attribute cross effects to be modelled with a relatively small number of choice sets.

To analyse the relationship between the hedonic preferences and the hedonic perceptions of various floral products a set of 16 items were constructed based on the framework of aesthetic dimensions as described by (Ellis 1993) and the attributes of floral products described by (Behe et al. 1994). The aesthetic dimensions used were those considered to be relevant to the measurement of the hedonic value of a floral product, namely: form, structure, texture, colour, simplicity/complexity, harmony, balance, unity, style and novelty. These elements were then adapted to form a set of 16 items, which were used to measure firstly, the floral hedonic preferences, and secondly the hedonic perceptions of the floral products in this study.

RESULTS

Hedonic preferences were studied for each consumer market segment (see (Oppenheim 2000) for a description of the CHAID approach which was adopted to segment the floral consumer market). Measures of hedonic preference were derived by computing the mean values of respondents’ preferences, as measured on a five-point scale, for a number of hedonic dimensions, see table 1. Hedonic perceptions for each of the floral products used in the study were then computed from a similar scale. Finally, the hedonic gap was computed for each floral product in each segment by subtracting the preference score, as given in table 1, from the corresponding perception score for each hedonic attribute and summing the squared differences. The resulting hedonic gaps, which are presented in table 2, represent a measure of the amount by which each floral product fails to meet the stated hedonic preferences of target consumers. The greater the hedonic gap the greater the difference between the consumers’ hedonic preferences and their perceptions of particular floral products.

By inspection the results of the hedonic gap analysis in table 2, suggest that iris, closely followed by asiatic and oriental lily, with the smallest overall hedonic gaps were most likely to meet the hedonic needs of floral consumers across all three segments. While the relatively larger hedonic gaps possessed by chrysanthemum, carnation and gerbera would indicate that these flowers were on average less able to meet the hedonic needs of floral consumers. On a segment basis, the low aggregate hedonic gap in segment 2 suggests that, with the exception of chrysanthemum and carnation, most floral products possess the ability to meet this segment’s hedonic needs. In contrast, oriental lily appears to be the only floral product that most nearly meets the hedonic preferences of floral consumers in segment 1.

The hypothesised ability of floral products to differentially meet the needs of floral consumers in different market segments suggests that the hedonic gap could be related to and in part explain a variation in floral choice probabilities among floral products. To explore this relationship a correlation analysis between floral choice probabilities, previously reported by (Oppenheim and Fry 2000) and the hedonic gaps shown in table 2 was undertaken. Figures 1, 2 and 3 depict the scatter plots, together with fitted trend lines, which were computed for each segment. Visual examination of the scatter plots suggests that floral choice was negatively related to the computed hedonic gap. Although not significant at the 10% level, Pearson’s correlation coefficients were estimated as –0.414, –0.235 and –0.483 for segments 1, 2 and 3 respectively. However, in segments 1 and 3 when two outliers (daffodil and iris) were deleted, Pearson’s correlation coefficient increased to –0.571 (p = 0.09) and –0.632 (p = 0.14) respectively. These results indicate that floral choice is related to both floral preferences and the hedonic perceptions that floral products portray.

To explain the variation in floral choice between segments in terms of hedonic gaps, the difference between the hedonic preference and the hedonic perception for each of 16 dimensions was
FIGURE 1
Floral Choice Probability by Hedonic Gap–Segment 1

Note: (a) The legend for floral products is given in table 2.

FIGURE 2
Floral Choice Probability by Hedonic Gap–Segment 2

FIGURE 3
Floral Choice Probability by Hedonic Gap–Segment 3
plotted for each floral product. As an example, the resulting chart for tulip is shown below in figure 4. The consistently smaller gaps perceived by respondents in segment 2 on virtually all dimensions serves to explain why consumers in this segment have the highest propensity to choose tulips and also accounts for the higher probability of choice that segment 2 placed on tulips (Oppenheim and Fry 2000).

The notion of the hedonic gap, which embodies the preferences and perceptions of floral consumers therefore provides a complementary explanation of floral choice and in turn provides an understanding, and explanation for hedonic competition within floral assortments. In the next section, the methodology adopted to identify groups of competitive floral products is discussed.

**Identification of Groups of Competitive Floral Products**

To identify groups of competitive floral products, a multiple discriminant analysis was conducted of respondents’ hedonic perceptions to ten floral products used in the study. This analysis allowed the various floral products to be plotted in two-dimensional competitive space as defined by their perceived hedonic attributes. The results of the multiple discriminant analysis appear in table 3. As the analysis involved ten floral products, nine discriminant functions were computed. The first four functions were significant at the p=0.0000 level and accounted for 94.2% of the variance in the data.

For descriptive purposes, the largest coefficients in each of the first two functions were examined. By inspection, the first discriminant function positively related to an expensive/romantic image associated with flowers. While the second discriminant function was positively related to an unusual image and negatively related to a romantic image. The first two discriminant functions may be used to define a two-dimensional space diagram upon which can be positioned the centroids of each floral product (Sudman and Blair 1998). In addition, the hedonic attributes on which the floral products were scored can also be mapped into two dimensional space using the pooled within-groups correlations between the discriminating variables and the first two discriminant functions, as the coordinates of the attributes. The resulting floral perceptual map shown in figure 5 reveals the relationship between the ten floral products and their perceived hedonic attributes. Floral products that were closely positioned were then perceived as being similar to each other while flowers that were further apart from one another were perceived as being more distinct or dissimilar. In this way, groups of floral products were formed on the basis of their perceived hedonic attributes. In addition, the relative lengths of the attribute vectors indicates the amount of variance explained by the two functions while the direction of the attribute vectors helps to further interpret the discriminant functions and so helps explain the relative differences between the various floral products. The physical position of the floral products also indicates the degree to which they are perceived to be associated with the various hedonic attributes. The closer the product is positioned to the path of an attribute vector the more closely that product is perceived to be associated with that attribute. Also, the further the product is positioned from the origin, the greater the degree of association with the attribute.

By inspection, figure 5 shows that three groups of floral products may be distinguished. The first group could be defined as including freesia, daffodil, chrysanthemum and carnation. These flowers lie within an arc of attribute vectors that include nostalgia, old fashioned, cheerful, seasonal and natural images. Accordingly this group may be described as consisting of flowers that are perceived as being “Old Fashioned and Natural”. As carnation is somewhat separated from the others in the group it might be distinguished from the others to form a sub-group which could be referred to as “Nostalgic” while freesia, daffodil and chrysanthemum could be referred to as “Seasonal”.

A second group can be identified consisting of one floral product, the rose, which by itself is strongly perceived as having a romantic image. Therefore, this floral product could be considered as comprising the “Romantic” group. The third group is positioned in the upper right quadrant and incorporates the remaining floral products.

**FIGURE 4**

Preference/Perception Gaps in Tulipa

Note: (a) See table 1 for a listing of the various hedonic dimensions.
TABLE 1
Mean Hedonic Floral Preferences by Segment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hedonic Floral Attribute</th>
<th>Segment 1</th>
<th>Segment 2</th>
<th>Segment 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Looks expensive</td>
<td>3.3056</td>
<td>3.0909</td>
<td>2.8268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Modern appearance</td>
<td>2.8056</td>
<td>2.9021</td>
<td>2.7717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Looks beautiful</td>
<td>4.4167</td>
<td>4.2587</td>
<td>4.4141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Old fashioned</td>
<td>2.7143</td>
<td>3.1189</td>
<td>3.3465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Artificial appearance</td>
<td>1.4167</td>
<td>1.6549</td>
<td>1.4524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Beautiful shape</td>
<td>3.8056</td>
<td>3.8803</td>
<td>4.0079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Unusual appearance</td>
<td>3.7222</td>
<td>3.3077</td>
<td>3.2677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Reminds one of nature</td>
<td>3.3333</td>
<td>3.3592</td>
<td>3.4961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Facilitates a peaceful feeling</td>
<td>3.5278</td>
<td>3.5385</td>
<td>3.8175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Makes one cheerful</td>
<td>3.8056</td>
<td>3.965</td>
<td>4.3125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Romantic flowers</td>
<td>3.4722</td>
<td>3.5035</td>
<td>3.6693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Exclusive looking flowers</td>
<td>3.4444</td>
<td>3.1049</td>
<td>3.0551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Reminds one of the season</td>
<td>3.1667</td>
<td>3.1538</td>
<td>3.4803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Flowers that give joy</td>
<td>3.9722</td>
<td>3.9858</td>
<td>4.4724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Provide nostalgic memories</td>
<td>2.9444</td>
<td>3.0563</td>
<td>3.4961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Flowers with attractive petals</td>
<td>3.8056</td>
<td>3.6503</td>
<td>3.8594</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

products. Gerbera, iris, Asiatic lily and Oriental lily are all included in the arc of attributes, which include the modern, expensive, artificial, exclusive, unusual and beautiful images. This group could therefore be described as the “Exclusive” group and like the “Old Fashioned and Natural” group may be divided into two subgroups. As tulip appears to be more closely associated with an “Expensive” image this flower might form a subgroup of its own while the remaining flowers could form the final subgroup which might be described as including the “Unusual” flowers.


The structure derived above provides an intuitively appealing framework in which to analyse floral competition. For managerial purposes the competitive floral structure presented in figure 5 implies that floral products in the same group are more likely to fulfil similar hedonic values. Accordingly, it would be expected that flowers in the same or closely related group could be expected to act as substitutes while flowers in separate groups might be expected to act as complementary products. However when the results of the hedonic gap analysis are combined with the competitive market structure a clearer understanding of the forces driving floral choice may be expected. Future research will attempt to test this hypothesis.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on exploratory research, it was proposed that competition between floral products could result from the unique and perhaps individual way that each floral buyer perceived various floral products. The perception of particular floral products held by any individual is in turn dependent upon the value set of that individual.

In this paper the hedonic preferences and perceptions of floral consumers were examined and a new measure, the hedonic gap was introduced to provide an estimate of the ability that each floral product had to meet the needs of particular floral buyers. The analysis presented in this paper identified that a significant variation in the perception of floral products existed between market segments. These results implied that floral products might be categorised according to the way in which various floral consumers perceive them. Consequently, any valid grouping of floral products with respect to the hedonic perceptions of floral buyers implies the potential for hedonic competition between floral products.

The improved understanding of the factors associated with floral choice, together with the improved knowledge and insights with respect to the various competitive market relationships that
FIGURE 5
Competitive Floral Map

TABLE 2
Floral Hedonic Gap by Segment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Floral Product</th>
<th>Segment 1</th>
<th>Segment 2</th>
<th>Segment 3</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F Freesia</td>
<td>12.05</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>6.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R Rose</td>
<td>11.45</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>7.81</td>
<td>7.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Daffodil</td>
<td>15.07</td>
<td>6.95</td>
<td>8.02</td>
<td>10.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Iris</td>
<td>6.87</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T Tulip</td>
<td>12.79</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>7.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ca Carnation</td>
<td>10.62</td>
<td>9.52</td>
<td>11.17</td>
<td>10.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch Chrysanthemum</td>
<td>22.79</td>
<td>12.51</td>
<td>15.49</td>
<td>16.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Asiatic Lily</td>
<td>6.21</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>4.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ol Oriental Lily</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>5.54</td>
<td>4.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Gerbera</td>
<td>28.15</td>
<td>6.61</td>
<td>12.38</td>
<td>15.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Value</td>
<td>12.99</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>8.03</td>
<td>8.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 3
Standardised Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Standardized Discriminant Function Coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Function 1(\textsuperscript{10})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks expensive</td>
<td>0.756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes you feel cheerful</td>
<td>-0.187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks like a romantic flower</td>
<td>0.446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks exclusive</td>
<td>0.152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reminds me of a season</td>
<td>-0.213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives me joy to look at</td>
<td>-0.062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aroused nostalgic memories</td>
<td>-0.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has an attractive arrangement of petals</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks modern</td>
<td>-0.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks beautiful</td>
<td>0.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks old fashioned</td>
<td>-0.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks artificial</td>
<td>0.186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has a beautiful shape</td>
<td>-0.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks unusual</td>
<td>-0.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reminds me of nature</td>
<td>-0.192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes me feel peaceful</td>
<td>0.097</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Function 1: Chi-square=689.07, 120 df, significance=0.0000, Canonical correlation=0.77, Eigenvalue=1.477, Percent variance=52%, Wilk’s lambda=0.318.

Function 2: Chi-square=357.12, 98 df, significance=0.0000, Canonical correlation=0.65, Eigenvalue=0.734, Percent variance=25%, Wilk’s lambda=0.553.

exist between floral products, provides important information for initiating tactical marketing decisions and strategic marketing plans (DeSarbo et al. 1993). From a managerial perspective, such decisions could include those involved in the initiation of promotional campaigns, the positioning of new varieties of cut flowers and the repositioning older varieties.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Although increasing attention has been given to ethical consumption (Devinney, et al 2006; McDonald et al. 2006; Shaw et al. 2005; Szszmign and Carrigan 2005), less is known as to how such decisions are thought through. It is clear that ethical considerations are entering consumer purchase decisions but there is still a ‘disconnect’ between the issues consumers claim to care about and ‘their purchasing behavior’ (Belk, Devinney and Eckhardt 2005, 276).

In this study we aim to develop the area of ethical consumption theory through an empirical study with consumers whose purchases do include ethical choices, identified here as conscious consumers. We consider two key areas of theory on which to present this research, dissonance and flexibility, neither of which has been explored in the context of ethical consumption. The paper introduces the concept of the conscious consumer in opposition to previous definitions of ethical consumers and voluntary simplifiers. It then considers the contribution made by existing theories of consumer decision making in helping to understand ethical consumption choices. Empirical research with nine conscious consumers is then explored and the applicability of the theory to their behavior considered. We conclude with a discussion of the issues involved in the better integration and understanding of ethical decision making into peoples’ consumption lives.

The conscious consumer is still a ‘work in progress’ (Siegle 2006, 9). Their decisions centre around whether to consume with sensitivity through selecting ethical alternatives (Szmigin and Carrigan 2005, 609), underpinned by complex attitudes, inclinations and lifestyle goals. Peattie (1999) suggests that the best way to understand ethical consumerism is to view each individual’s consumption as a series of transaction decisions that include decisions to engage or not in alternative consumption behavior. While this moves the research into more uncertain and ambiguous territory, emphasising the plurality and diversity of each consumer creates the potential to take forward the debate on sustainable consumption, and the conflicts and challenges it represents for the majority.

Within the psychology and consumer behavior literature, a lack of a conspicuous definition has resulted in the development of a multi-dimensional construct that encompasses interrelated terms such as trade-off analysis (Johnson 1974), contingent decision behavior (Payne 1982) and ‘adaptive decision-making’ (Payne, Bettman and Johnson 1993). Interactions with other related theories are also apparent, namely attitude-behavior consistency (Zanna, Olson and Fazio 1981), brand-switching and variety-seeking behavior (Bawa 1990). In the absence of a consumer-based definition of the term, flexibility is described here as the inherent ability to change, adapt and/or react to decision-making environments with little forfeiture of time, effort, cost or product performance.

An important aspect of choice is that the consumer may be trading off quality, price and other factors with social or environmental concerns such as under what condition the product was made, or how far it traveled. This in turn may create dissonance. A major contribution to understanding dissonance in the area of ethical consumption comes from the self-consistency interpretation of dissonance (Aronson 1992). Here dissonance occurs when a situation creates inconsistency between the self-concept and behavior. The importance of self-concept is also apparent in self-affirmation theory which suggests that dissonance is a consequence of behavior which is counter to a person’s moral and global integrity (Steele, Spencer and Lynch 1993).

In-depth interviews were conducted with nine consumers who identified themselves as regularly buying ethical products. The themes of flexibility and dissonance were not explicitly presented in the research questions; at the interview stage we were interested in asking about how and why participants shopped the way they did and the feelings they had about their shopping behavior. The verbatim transcripts were interpreted using a translation of text approach (Hirschmann and Holbrook 1992).

The participants in this study reveal a mixture of behaviors and beliefs about their ethical consumption. The awareness and desire to make, in the most part, informed and considered ethical choices lead us to suggest that there are probably a substantial number of people who are what we have termed conscious consumers. While their inconsistencies might be construed as flaws in their self-integrity, in fact, what we have termed their flexibility seems to help them manage the difficulties and problems of accommodating their own and their families’ tastes, budgets and ethical concerns. The tendency to rationalize the decisions we make is normal. We experience threats to our self-concepts and feel uncomfortable to the extent that we believe we have made a less than optimal decision (Hosino-Browne et al. 2005). The participants did not need to seek self-affirming resources in response to a threat to their self-image. Indeed most willingly discussed their range of behaviors without recourse to any justification. This may be because the nature of the participants as well educated, resourceful individuals reduced the threat to their self integrity but research also shows that inconsistency between cognitions is not necessarily enough to arouse dissonance especially where such inconsistency does not involve aversive consequences (Steele, Spencer and Lynch 1993). It may also be that the inconsistencies in behavior are not important enough to create dissonance (Festinger 1957) and so there is no motivation to minimize or even rationalize these choices. Studies in cognitive dissonance have tended to be experimental in nature involving hypothetical situations whereas here consumers are recounting their day-to-day activities and reflecting on them. The concept of flexibility offers an explanation to what may appear as inconsistencies between attitudes and behavior but which do not create dissonance problems that threaten the person’s self-integrity. While some were prepared to describe themselves as hypocrites, their reluctance to take what was referred to as the moral high ground indicates a recognition of their own limitations but also an acceptance that integrating ethical considerations into their consumption behavior is a complex and flexible project.

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An Existential Analysis of Consumers as “Incarnated Beings”: A Merleau-Pontyian Perspective
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Janine Dermody, University of Gloucestershire, UK
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ABSTRACT
As consumer research continues to be dominated by a ‘disembodied’ perspective predicated on the ‘mind-centred’ school of cognitive psychology, it has also witnessed the growing prominence of interpretive research, for example Consumer Culture Theory (CCT). As such, the field has begun to embrace the idea of consumers as incarnated beings, whose embodied experience sutures them to their lifeworld in a particular time and space. This paper proposes that the existential-phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty illuminates the richest account of the body as the experiential locus of existence and knowledge. As such it provides consumer researchers with a fertile ground on which to theorize consumers from an embodied standpoint. This paper will explore several concepts of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology including (1) the body-subject (2) perception as a perspectival mode of embodied engagement (3) the phenomenal body (4) corporeal schema and the enfleshment of material possessions (5) habitual schema (6) intersubjectivity and (7) situated freedom and embodied projects. In so doing, we will be able to provide insights for an embodied re-reading of various theories including self-identity, materialism and the dialogical relationships between structure-agency and therefore address the quiet presence of the body within consumer research.

INTRODUCTION

We shall need to reawaken our experience of the world as it appears to us in so far as we are in the world through our body, and in so far as we perceive the world with our body. But by thus remaking contact with the body and with the world, we shall also rediscover ourself, since perceiving as we do with our body, the body is a natural self; as we were, the subject of perception.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961)

Despite the shifting agenda in consumer research focusing on cultural consumption, the concept of “embodiment” remains a relatively uncharted terrain within the discipline. Instead, priority is given to other aspects of consumer culture such as subculture, marketplace symbolism and meanings, self-identities, gender politics. While such topics are exciting areas of consumer research, lurking within these inquiries is the quiet presence of the body.

Joy and Venkatesh (1994) lament the absence of studies pertaining to the theorization of the body within consumer research, which is, in part, attributable to the continuing domination of a “mind-centred” epistemology influenced by cognitive psychology (Thompson et. al, 1989). Consequently, this has significantly marginalized the exploration of consumers as “embodied beings”, in favour of an information-processing model of consumer behaviour. In other words, consumer research has, until recently, been epistemologically disembodied, trapped within the iron cage of the Cartesian legacy that has informed much of Western philosophy.

The body, however, whether explicitly or tacitly, has been variously implicated within consumer research. It has been regarded as a canvas of subcultural and tribal inscription (Rook, 1985; Goulding and Follett, 2002); a vehicle of aesthetic expression (Meamber and Venkatesh 1999) and experience (Joy and Sherry, 2003); a theatre where identity is performed (Butler, 1993; Schroeder and Borgerson, 2004), constructed (Patterson and Elliot, 2002) managed (Banister and Hogg, 2002; Valtonen, 2004), transformed (Schouten, 1991; Seebaransingh et al. 2002); a site of discursive formation and disciplinary biopower (Thompson and Hirschman, 1995); a representation and construction of ‘cyborgic’ coupling (Giesler and Venkatesh, 2005; Lai et al. 2005).

Increasingly, then, consumer scholars are beginning to embrace a more ‘embodied’ perspective of consumers. Embodiment has been explored from various ontological positions; ranging from Foucauldian post-structuralism (e.g. Thompson and Hirschman, 1995); Goffmanian dramaturgy (e.g. Valtonen, 2004), to postmodern feminism (e.g. Joy and Venkatesh 1994; Meamber and Venkatesh, 1999). These are broadly described by Grosz (1994) as the ‘inscription’ perspective, which provides an account of the body as a tableau of symbolic imprint and a site of discursive production—such as a socio-historical construction (Shilling, 1993).

While the ‘inscription’ perspective has been especially prominent among consumer researchers, we maintain that there is a need to address the ‘lived experience’ (Grosz, 1994) of consumers as embodied beings. We will therefore adopt a phenomenological perspective, which entails a “repositioning of the body as a site of knowledge/experience and intention/action, shaped (never determined) by social structure” (Howson and Inglis, 2001: 302). The ‘lived’ perspective is beginning to gain momentum within the broader social sciences predicated mainly on the work of Merleau-Ponty (e.g. Csordas, 1994; Crossley, 1995; Williams and Bendelow, 1998; Leder, 1990).

Consumer scholars such as Thompson and Hirschman (1998), Thompson (1998) and Joy and Sherry (2003) have subscribed to the phenomenological inquiry of embodiment. There is, however, a danger of overgeneralizing the tenet of phenomenology by combining the concepts of various phenomenologists and ignoring the different strands of thought these philosophers embrace. Thus while these scholars provide an impressive account of the body as the existential immersion into the lifeworld, it is the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty (1945/2002) that they are indebted to, in conceptualizing consumers as incarnated beings.

As Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy challenges the dogmatism of Cartesian philosophy (Williams and Bendelow, 1998), it has the potential to break its hegemonic hold on consumer research. Merleau-Ponty presents the richest account of human corporeality, and thus provides a fertile ground for researchers to conceptualize the consumers from an embodied standpoint. Yet while his contemporaries have implicated the centrality of the body as a foundation of knowledge, it has never been their central concern. For example, Husserl (1936/1970) prioritized the transcendental ego qua consciousness; Heidegger (1927/1962) emphasized the ontology of Dasein while Sartre (1943/1956) failed to transcend the dualism of the in-itself/for-itself in which consciousness remained the priority of his philosophy. Thus while consumer researchers have certainly acknowledged Merleau-Ponty’s contributions (Thompson and Hirschman, 1998; Joy and Sherry, 2003; Churchill and Wertz, 1985; Patterson and Elliot, 2002), they have only provided a partial
account of his philosophical assumptions. For example, limited attention has been given to Merleau-Ponty’s endorsement of the ontology of the flesh—i.e. what does it mean to be bodies?

Far from a disembodied thinker, consumers are what Merleau-Ponty (1945/2002) called ‘body-subjects’, whose embodied experience subsumes them to their lifeworld in a particular time (historicity) and space (socio-cultural context). As such, Merleau-Ponty is able to engage in a dialogue with the ‘inscription perspective’ (Crossley, 1996) by attending to the meanings and ‘lived experience’ of consumers. Body subjects are dynamically involved in a network of social relations (intersubjectivity) and are therefore subjected to the production of discursive power (French, 1994). In short, a Merleau-Pontyian phenomenology endorses the:

“experientially grounded view of human embodiment as the existential basis of our being-in-the-world, one which overcomes past dualities (e.g. body/mind) and in doing so helps us move outwards toward a broader understanding of the relationship between body and self, culture and society.” (Williams and Bendelow, 1998: 8, italics in original).

In this paper, we will discuss the basic tenets of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology in order to explore the consumer as incarnated subject. In so doing, we will be able to present an embodied re-reading of various theories within consumer research including self-identity, embodied projects, materialism and the dialogical relationships between structure-agency.

BODY-SUBJECT: EXISTENTIAL SUTURING OF EMBODIMENT AND LIFEWORLD

Traditionally, the external world was assumed to be distinct from the experiencing subject. This has given rise to the subject/object dualism. For example, through the methodology of radical doubt, Descartes posits that the external world is a projection within the inner theatre of the mind. Therefore perception¹ of the external world (object) becomes a representation of mental (pure) consciousness (subject), a notion devoid of embodied experience sutures them to their lifeworld in a particular time (historicity) and space (socio-cultural context). As such, Merleau-Ponty is able to engage in a dialogue with the ‘inscription perspective’ (Crossley, 1996) by attending to the meanings and ‘lived experience’ of consumers. Body subjects are dynamically involved in a network of social relations (intersubjectivity) and are therefore subjected to the production of discursive power (French, 1994). In short, a Merleau-Pontyian phenomenology endorses the:

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For Merleau-Ponty, the world is not an object separate from the embodied subject; rather it is a ‘field of possibilities’ in which the body-subject is intimately entwined. As ‘body-subject’, one does not possess nor create the world like it is an innate entity. Perception is therefore an active and practical mode of incarnated engagement with the world (Crossley, 1995). Thus, the theory of the body is already a theory of perception (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2002). The world is already there (Heidegger, 1927/1962), but it only comes into being through my experiencing it. Following Heidegger, then, Merleau-Ponty introduces the incarnate subject as already situated in-the-world. By perceiving, the world and I come into being. The communion between the embodied subject and the world becomes the locus of existence and therefore the site of knowledge formation (Howson and Inglis, 2001):

“The perceiving mind is an incarnated body. I have tried to...re-establish the roots of the mind in its body, and in its world, going against doctrines which treat perception as a simple result of the action of the external things on our body as well as against those who insist on the autonomy of consciousness....And it is equally clear that one does not account for the facts by superimposing a pure, contemplative consciousness on a thing-like body.....Perceptual behaviour emerges...from relations to a situation and to an environment which are not merely the working of a pure, knowing subject.” (Merleau-Ponty 1963:3-4 quoted in Grosz, 1994: 87)

To understand the relationship between subject and object is to understand the notion of intentionality. Husserl (1936/1970) stressed the philosophical concept of intentionality—a concept that traditionally refers to the relationship between the subject and the object as the basic structure of consciousness. Thus “consciousness is always a consciousness of something”. Phenomenologically, the principal of intentionality implies that the body-subject is always directed at the object of his experience (the world). To eradicate the cognitive overtone of Hurserlian’s phenomenology, Heidegger posits that “the person exists only in the performance of intentional act” (Heidegger, 1962 in Dreyfus, 1999: 49). Intentionality for Heidegger, therefore, refers to the human comportment who is already situated in the world as ‘being-directed-towards’ its activity (Dreyfus, 1999).

Although Heidegger has never adopted an embodied perspective, it is Merleau-Ponty, his ardent follower who later embraces the body as the site of intentionality. The body-subject is comported towards the world whose experience opens up inexhaustible, meaningful possibilities (Young, 1990a). For Merleau-Ponty, then, human beings cannot simply be reduced to ‘purely mind’ (subject), or merely bodies (object), for the mind is always incarnated and vice versa (Grosz, 1994; Howson and Inglis, 2001).

Thus, consumers, as embodied beings, are immersed in their practical world and seek to act upon it in a purposeful manner (intentionality). The world in which consumers are embedded is already imbued with primordial meanings. Through intentional comportment, they take up meaningful positions within the world in a purposeful fashioning of their personal lifeworld (Langer, 1989; Borgerson, 2005; Thompson, 1998). In short, consumers receive the world through their embodied comportment and in turn personalized the world (eigenwelt) by engaging in:

“an active process in which the organism interrogates its worldly surround, guided by both biological sensitivities and behavioural-perceptual schemas, thereby creating for itself a subjective ‘milieu’ or ‘lifeworld.’ Moreover, it is events as experienced within this subjectively meaningful lifeworld which trigger and shape our other behaviour. We respond to the world as we perceive it.” (Crossley, 2001: 71)

Thus, the body becomes the point of insertion, which opens out onto the (cultural) world (Leder, 1990) to form a meaningful gestalt—i.e. our embodied life is inextricably bound to the world through which meanings emerge as an experiential whole. The world and the embodied subject thus reach out to each other in a dialectical fashion:

“Parts and wholes evolve in consequence of their relationship, and the relationship itself evolves. There are the properties of things that we call dialectical: that one thing cannot exist

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¹Perception is traditionally understood as the effect of the sensation of external objects on the perceiving subjects (Matthews, 2006)
²Intentionality is a concept first introduced by Franz Brentano (1837-1917) to understand consciousness. To say that consciousness is intentional is to say that it is always directed towards or refers to some objects. Consciousness is always consciousness of something. (Matthews 2006)
PERSPECTIVITY

The primordial bond consumers have with the world implies the ‘situatedness’ of being-in-the-world. Given such ‘situatedness’, our perception is therefore essentially perspectival—i.e. one always observes from somewhere, never from nowhere (Crossley, 1995). Such a view posits that researchers do not assume an objective view of the world, i.e. a view without perspective operating on the principle of universality, for its richness is only revealed to the researcher from a particular perspective within a particular context. Accordingly the world both precedes and exceeds our ability to grasp it (Churchill and Wertz, 1985).

Absolute objectivity in a rationalistic way is, therefore, difficult to achieve. Such a disembodied worldview is what Merleau-Ponty termed the “God’s eye view” of scientific knowledge, which portrays the researcher as a distant and dispassionate observer taking an omnipotent worldview—a view devoid of subjective human traces. The disembodied perceiver is thus a ‘transcendental subject’ (Matthews, 2006). As an embodied being, it is not possible to leap out from the body and occupy an objective space (Langer, 1989).

In short then, the ‘lived body’ affords us an anchorage in the world and situates us within our ‘perspectival horizon’, where we realize our place in the world. Therefore our view of the world is always figurally partial and incomplete against the background of an ‘inexhaustible world’ (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Hence our embodied existence is always opens to indeterminacy (Csordas, 1994), yet presents us with infinite possibilities at the same time. The perceptual world, then, according to Merleau-Ponty an is:

“unknown territory as long as we remain in the practical or utilitarian attitude, and that it needs much time and effort, as well as culture…to lay this world bare.” (Merleau-Ponty 2004: 39 in Matthews, 2006: 26)

THE PHENOMENAL BODY

Although we are biological creatures, as human beings we do not experience our bodies as if they are machines, in a strictly Cartesian manner (Burkitt, 1999). The body is permeated with intentionality, which acts as an experiential pivot of being-in-the-world. As body-subjects, we actively act on our surroundings and possibly transform them (Crossley, 1995). This mode of embodiment is what Merleau-Ponty termed the ‘phenomenal body’—a body-lived-from-within, which privileges the first-person perspective (Leder, 1990).

Yet, Merleau-Ponty never denies the material basis of our existence: “To be a lived body is also to be a physical body with bones, tendons, nerves and sinews, all of which can be scientifically characterized” (Leder, 1990: 6). Our personal existence is rooted in our materiality but we experience our body as an active transcendence over the immanence (Young, 1990a). We both have (possess) and are our bodies (being):

“But I am not in front of my body, I am in it, or rather I am it. …The body is to be compared, not to a physical object, but rather a work of art…. In this sense as a work of art…the novelist’s task is not to expound ideas or even analyze characters, but to depict an inter-human event, ripening and bursting it upon us with no ideological commentary. It is a nexus of living meanings.” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002: 173-175)

The ‘phenomenal body’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2002) is the body as ‘lived’, through our practical engagement with our everyday habitus (Bourdieu, 1984). Giddens concurred that the body is “an action-system, a mode of praxis, and its practical immersion in the interaction of day-to-day life is an essential part of the sustaining of a coherent sense of self-identity” (1991: 99). Although Merleau-Ponty has never used this term, his thesis displays striking similarity to Bordieu’s concept of habitus which is a:

“system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them.” (Bourdieu, 1990: 53 in Burkitt, 1999: 85)

Merleau-Ponty refers to our habit as bodily orientation of being-in-the-world (Burkitt, 1999; Crossley, 2001). Like Bourdieu (1984), Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the intentional arc can be understood as acquired skills/habits sedimented within our corporeal schema. Such sedimentation of acquired skills equip us with bodily dispositions (comportment) to help us respond to situations in the world (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1999; Joy and Sherry, 2003). As such our corporeal comportment orientates us to the world and enables us to have a ‘maximum grip’ (competence), which frees us to accomplish our life projects (Langer, 1989).

It is through our phenomenal bodies that we can competently live and cope with the world without needing to think about it. When an individual walks towards the University, they do not need to think and command their foot to place itself in front of the other. This is because their body (foot) is incorporated into their corporeal schema, deposited as habits through their everyday praxis and, over time, has acquired the ‘know-how’ (maximal grip) of synthesizing with the world. In turn, their reliance on their body as ‘taken-for-granted’ liberates them to focus on their goal/destination of reaching the campus. In short, their corporeal schema, represented as habits, enables them to ‘automatically’ engage with the world without resorting to their cognitive facility. Their world and their body are coordinated in a harmonious pre-reflexive dance. Thus, Merleau-Ponty (1945/2002: 173) asserts that our existence is not a matter of ‘I think’ but rather ‘I can’.

Leder (1990) extended Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the phenomenal body in his seminal work, The Absent Body. Leder reminds us that our lived experience is typified by the bodily state of continual ‘disappearance’, so enabling our life project to unfold without disruption (Williams and Bendelow, 1998). In order for us to competently engage with the world, the body recedes into the background (taken-for-granted) while the world surfaces and comes to life. However, our body comes to the fore of our perceptual field and becomes the thematic object of experience when it is in the state of dysfunction (Leder, 1990), or when it is subjected to objectifying gaze (Sartre, 1943/1956). In such a state, our bodily intentionality is inhibited and, so melts away our taken-for-granted structures of the world, causing us to experience a disjuncture in our self-narratives (Williams and Bendelow, 1998). We therefore experience our body as an objectified alien presence (Leder, 1990). As such it is through the ‘absence’ of our phenomenal body that we can participate in the cultural world, and it is this which will now discuss.
CORPOREAL SCHEMA AND THE ENFLESHMENT OF MATERIAL POSSESSIONS

As the point of insertion into the cultural world, the phenomenal body is malleable (Shilling, 1993), plastic (Bordo, 1993) and bionics (Synnott, 1993). The plasticity of the phenomenal body enables us to acquire cultural skills as well as social structures (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1999) and to assimilate cultural artifacts, such as technology and language, into our corporeal schema. As such, our phenomenal body is a means for us to ‘have’ and participate in the cultural world (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2002). This provides further insights for researchers to explore consumer’s cultural embodiment (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1999) which connects the self, material possessions, the body and the cultural world.

This is exemplified by Merleau-Ponty’s illustration of the blind man’s stick. Through gradual mastery, the blind man appropriates the stick as an extension of his bodily schema to help him find his way in the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2002). The blind man’s stick becomes pregnant with practical, emotional, sensual and imaginative meanings as a result of the blind man’s response and engagement with the world. Once incorporated into the blind man’s corporeal schema, the stick is no longer experienced as an external object. Instead the stick becomes ‘well in hand’ sedimented as habitual familiarity and then recedes into the background of the blind man’s perceptual field in a taken-for-granted manner. The stick blends in unison with the blind man’s body and his world:

“To get use to a hat, a car or a stick is to be transplanted into them, or conversely, to incorporate them into the bulk of our own body. Habit expresses our power of diluting our ‘being-in-the-world’, or changing our existence by appropriating fresh instruments.” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2002: 166)

The blind man’s stick illustration resonates strongly with Belk’s theory of the extended self (1988). A phenomenological reading would hopefully enable consumer researchers to appreciate possessions not merely as an extension of the self but a holistic chiasm between consumers as embodied beings, their material possessions and the cultural world.

As Borgerson (2005) observes, Belk (1988) presumes that consumers form attachments to their possession as an expression of agentic control over material objects. Belk contends that objects and the body can be incorporated into the extended-self through control, mastery, creation, knowledge and contamination. A Merleau-Pontyan perspective affirms that possessions can become meaningful for consumers through the merging of materiality into the corporeal schema. The merging of the material possessions through practical usage in the everyday praxis can thus modify consumers’ corporeal schema and therefore alter their experience of being-in-the-world, and in time transform the world.

Burkitt (1999) added that cultural artifacts such as technology and language have the ability to transform the human world and change our way of being-in-the-world. Merleau-Ponty’s corporeal schema provides a ‘lived perspective’ to explore the growing interest in cyborgs as the hybrid between technology and the body (e.g. Giesler and Venkatesh, 2005). Objects in the world are manifestation of our humanity and civilization (Langer, 1989) and become what Heidegger (1927/1962) called ‘ready-to-hand’—i.e. ready for practical use to accomplish its purpose. Cultural objects are sculpted (designed) in the enfleshment of our bodily orientation to the world to ‘maximize our grip’ and increase our potential to accomplish our life projects. The bodily utilization of cultural objects creates a space through which the cultural world comes into being:

“The body is our general medium for having a world. Sometimes, it is restricted to the action necessary for the conservation of life, and accordingly posits around us a biological world…..Sometimes, finally, the meaning aimed at cannot be achieved by the body’s natural means; it must then build itself an instrument, and it projects thereby around itself a cultural world…Habit is merely a form of this fundamental power. We say that the body has understood and habit has been cultivated when it has absorbed a new meaning, and assimilated a fresh core of significance.” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2002: 169).

As such the extended self can be conceived as the co-constitution between the material world and consumers’ cultural embodiment. Such co-constitution may also illuminate Borgerson’s (2005) observation of objects as possessing a kind of ‘intentionality’—e.g. when we experience “a kind of control by things” (Belk, 1989: 130). In his unfinished work, The Visible and Invisible (1968), Merleau-Ponty wrote about the ontology of the flesh—i.e. the flesh of body is chiasmatically intertwined with the flesh of the (material) world (Crossley, 1995). Merleau-Ponty claims that such chiasmatic relationships between the body/world are characterized by reversibility. This implies that while consumers, as embodied perceivers (flesh of the body), could incorporate material possessions (flesh of the world or the perceived) into their corporeal schema, this chiasm can also be ‘reversed’. Such reversible aspects of the flesh mean that the perceiver is also the perceived, our embodiment is both sensible and sentient (Crossley, 1995), and, as such, is able to control (subject) and be controlled (object).

For Merleau-Ponty, social structure could not sustain itself without the continuous reproduction of cultural repertoires (in the form of habitual schema) generated by body-subjects. Similarly, body-subjects could not participate in the social world without embracing the various cultural repertoires and resources. Due to its reversibility, such chiasmatic relationships between the incarnated consumers, their material possessions and their world are never absolute distinctions (Crossley, 1995). This problematizes the enduring dualisms between structure/agency and subject/object which has haunted the social sciences.

HABITUAL SCHEMA, SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND DISCOURSE

As embodied beings, we are already in the world, more specifically, we are ‘thrown’ into the social world, which is always already there. Just as we come to know the presence of others through the human imprint of cultural objects (Langer, 1989); we are born into the pre-existing social and cultural conditions—which we embody as the ‘residue’ of collective habitual schemas. Merleau-Ponty therefore suggests that we are socialized into the world through the province of the phenomenal body that “comprehends, appropriates and sediments the human world into its own dynamic structure” (Langer, 1989: 101).

Language is one such collective habitual schema we adopt in order to competently participate in the social world. Although Merleau-Ponty’s thesis is never intended to be structuralist, he nevertheless recognized that body-subjects are practical agents who adopt and appropriate cultural resources such as language (qua social structure) in order to occupy their place in the world (Crossley, 1995). Language is a relatively stable cultural resource. We are therefore able to construct and make sense of our and other’s narratives through shared language:

“In the experience of dialogue, there is constituted between the other person and myself a common ground; my thought and his
are inter-woven into a single fabric, my words and those of my interlocutor are called forth by the state of the discussion, and they are inserted into a shared operation of which neither of us is the creator….we are collaborators for each other in consummate reciprocity. Our perspectives merge into each other, and we co-exist through a common world.” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2002: 413)

As *habitus* is relatively enduring, body-subject is able to derive certain stabilized ways of being and to sustain a coherent sense of self (Giddens, 1991; Crossley, 1996). By adopting various habitual schemas, we are also emitting and reproducing the cultural codes deposited within our embodied comportment (Crossley, 1995). Inevitably, then, body-subjects are interpellated into particular discourses by means of their embodied comportment; hence unwittingly entangled in the power configuration produced by such discursive interplay (Burkitt, 1999). Discourse à là Foucault is therefore a “fleshy process”-produced through the work of the active body (Crossley, 1996; 2001) and as such the body is both the locus of action and a target of power (Crossley, 1996). A dialogue can therefore be facilitated between the work of Merleau-Ponty and Foucault (Crossley, 1996).

In her seminal paper, *Throwing Like a Girl*, Iris Young (1990a) adopted Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological analysis to illustrate how women’s lived bodily comportment expresses their embodied subjectivity of being female in a patriarchal world. Young observed that feminine motility produces modalities that disempower women and render their experience of the body as being a ‘thing’. First of all, women experience the world in an ambiguous transcendence, where they typically refrain from using their whole body and tend to occupy a constricted space. Merleau-Ponty argued that by virtue of our body intentionality, we are able to open up and participate in the world and thus, transcend the immanence of our body. Women, however, experience an ambiguous transcendence for fear of eliciting unwanted gazes and spatial invasion in a culture where the female body is often objectified and defined as the ‘Other’. As such, women’s bodies are underused and fail to realize their full bodily potential, or what Young called inhibited intentionality. In sports, for example, women often limit the mobilization of their whole body and concentrate instead on a specific body part. This limits their ability to swing, throw and hence engenders their inability to take command of their surroundings. According to Young, women often stay bodily immobile, rooted to their space instead of reaching out to an incoming object (ball), if they have not already ducked to avoid getting hurt. Such discontinuous unity with their surroundings has contributed to women doubting the competency of their bodies and thus perpetuating the myth of women’s bodies as fragile and passive.

Such inhibited corporeality and spatial constriction are equally manifested in women’s consumption, especially clothing. Women’s clothing (ranging from high heels to brassiers) are remnants of enshrinement that traces women’s embodiment of a culture that tends to bind their bodies and restrict their postures. Hence, women experience a spatial confinement and discontinuity when they engage with their lifeworld. Wearing high heels, for example, hinders women from engaging in full bodily movement (inhibited intentionality) and inhibits their occupation of space. As such women’s bodily comportment creates an invisible prison that reproduces the gendering process and obstructs their bodily intentionality. Corsets and foot binding are traditional examples which, to a certain extent, maintained the gender/power relationships (Bordo, 1993). Such manipulation to constrict the body resulted in an ambiguous transcendence, which prevents women from fully connecting with the world of potentiality. Young (1990b) also noted how the wearing of brassier has contributed to the ambiguous transcendence of the breasts into a fetishized object. Specifically breasts are fetishized objects of male desire, in which the brassier functions to restrict female sexuality, by creating a barrier to touch. Encased within her brassier, women are confined and bordered, encaging the chest (which is the centre of a person’s being in-the-world) from fully opening out onto the world and its possibilities (Young, 1990b).

Young’s observation is perhaps best captured by the comedic portrayal of organizational dress code on Six Feet Under (Episode 5?: The Rainbow of Her Reasons). The character, Claire Fisher was complaining about the conservative dress code of the company where she is temples as being discriminative against women. Consider the conversation she engaged in with her colleague:

**Claire:** It’s just these pantyhose…They’re like squeezing my entire torso. I feel like I can’t even breathe. I mean none of this work would seem that hard if I didn’t feel like I was sitting here in some kind of a torture chamber all day.

**Colleague:** Maybe you should try a different brand. Mine energize me.

**Claire:** No it’s not the brand. They are all the same. I mean…I don’t understand, how having your legs sheathed in this like smooth plastic Barbie leg or encased in a sausage casing would help you do your job better. I mean doesn’t it seems sexist that it’s a regulation only for women?

**Colleague:** Men have to wear ties.

**Claire:** Right, but they don’t suffocate you. And it’s not on their penis.

**Colleague:** [Embarrassed] I’m gonna go wash out some mugs.

A dialogue with Foucault’s postructuralist perspective (1976) can generate some rich insights into the ‘lived perspective’ of discourse. Claire’s description of her embodied experience is narrated against the background of an organization that upholds the masculine-defined ideal. The organizational dress code is a manifestation of this patriarchal reproduction of gender/power dynamics. Claire describes how wearing pantyhose restricts her bodily intentionality from engaging with her job (squeezing of torso, difficulty breathing) and imprisons her within a confined space (torture chamber). Pantyhose are the mode of objectification that re-sculpts women’s body in the form of Barbie’s smoothness. In other words, Claire is subjected to a masculine discourse, which disciplines the female body through the production of a normative representation that defines acceptable dress code in terms of ‘professionalism’. Women are further disempowered through the
fetishization of their legs, (Kaplan, 1983 in Young, 1990c), where the body is objectified by isolating a specific body part to represent the unity of the phallus (Young, 1990c). While a tie is the male-equivalent of representing male professionalism, it does not impede their bodily intentionality (they don’t [deliberately] suffocate you), nor does it emphasize gender objectification and fetishization (it’s not on their penis).

**INTERSUBJECTIVITY**

Being-in-the-world necessarily means being in a social world where body-subjects co-exist in a shared ‘intermundane space’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 269 in Crossley, 1995). To be intersubjective is to have a reciprocal appreciation for other human beings as subjects with intentionality, thoughts and emotions (Matthews, 2006). Thus consumers and researchers are embodied beings, belonging to the world through ‘carnal intersubjectivity’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1964), and as such share the experience of humanity as ‘a primordial carnal bond between human beings’ (Crossley, 1995: 57). We project towards each other as a prolongation and fulfilment of mutual intentionality. Our incompleteness of being anchored within the horizon of perspectivity, means that we enrich each other and complement our myopic worldview (Langer, 1989). Our perspective slips into one another and gives birth to shared social meanings. It is, therefore, through other incarnated subjects that we are able to find ourselves. In other words, our embodied self is rooted in the world through which we weave a social fabric of shared cultural meanings. To paraphrase Shakespeare, the world is a stage through which we, as embodied beings play out the narratives of our social lives (Thompson, 1998):

“My body and the world are no longer objects co-ordinated together by the kind of functional relations that physics establishes. The system of experience in which they intercommunicate is not spread out before me and ranged over by a constituting consciousness. I have the world as an incomplete individual, through the agency of my body as the potentiality of this world.” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2002: 408 italic in original)

In short, it is through the ‘reawakening’ of our senses, so to speak, that we can be re-connected with the world and thus, rediscover ourselves and our place in it. Such a humanistic approach has major implications for consumer researchers who are reflexively considering their roles in “enhancing consumer welfare”, as mirrored in the recent call for Transformative Consumer Research (TCR). Researchers and participants are embodied beings who share an intersubjective bond as human beings, mutually enriching each other’s worldview-in the manner of a hermeneutic circle (Thompson, 1997). Research is necessarily a collaborative practice (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995) that calls for mutual respect and should therefore aim to be power-neutral (Shankar et. al., 2001).

**FREEDOM AND EMBODIED PROJECT**

So far, we have discussed the notion of consumers, as incarnated beings, who are sutured to the social world that provides the setting where the embodied selves can unfold in a coherent manner. By virtue of their incarnated subjectivity, consumers are active agents who exercise freedom in deciding how their life project will unfold. However, to what extent is our freedom constrained by our situational circumstances? Such existential anguish concerning freedom is poignantly expressed in Jean-Paul Sartre’s masterpiece, *Being and Nothingness* (1943/1956). Sartre depicts the existential paradox of being–(1) being-in-itself (en-soi) and (2) being-for-itself (pour-soi). On the one hand, the body is a ‘being-in-itself’–i.e. body as the brute facticity of one’s existence (Thompson and Hirschman, 1998). Our facticialities include our social circumstances (Thompson and Hirschman, 1998), choices we made in the past, but more fundamentally the sheer nakedness of being born with a body and thus subjected to a corporeal existence (Catalano, 1980). We share a ‘horizon of carnal experience’ of inheriting a body which eats, sleeps, excretes, dies, feels etc. (Fontana and Van de Water, 1977). The body-in-itself is the terminus state of being.

Yet our body is also primarily a ‘being-for-itself’–i.e. body is a lived consciousness that reconnects one to the world of invested possibilities. As such the ‘body-for-itself’ is a body that is in the continuous process of coming-to-be. Such continual fashioning of the body project is a state of constant flux, seething with uncertainties (Fontana and Van de Water, 1977). As such humans constantly seek to rid themselves from such continuous transcendence by striving to be a thing-in-itself–i.e. to be in the end state of being (for example, by conforming to social convention unquestioningly). Thus we have a tendency to live under the grip of what Sartre called ‘bad faith’, in which we fool ourselves into believing that we are not really free to transcend the given circumstances of our life (Wood, 2000).

Although Sartre, at times, acknowledges that our freedom is situated, his central thesis maintained the possibility and the need to exercise absolute freedom, unburdened by our facticialities (Matthews, 2006). For Sartre, we are what we make of our lives and we, solely, are responsible for what we commit ourselves to be (Fontana and Van de Water, 1977).

Freedom according to Merleau-Ponty cannot be absolute, as it denotes making meaningful choices. In making meaningful choices, it necessarily involves obstacles–i.e. in making certain choices, we forego another. Freedom without obstacles is a meaningless endeavor–“when there is no obstacle there is nothing to do” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2002: 509). As embodied subjects, consumers are liable to the existential condition of ‘throwness’–i.e. being born into the preexisting sociocultural circumstances (Heidegger, 1927/1962; Thompson, 1998). Consequently the actualization of existential possibilities can only materialize within the ‘given’ circumstances to which the consumers are situated. It is within such situatedness that consumers fashion their embodied project (Thompson and Hirschman, 1998).

Embodied projects involve the commitment of exercising freedom in an ongoing and purposeful manner through which our personal history comes into being. Our life project is akin to the working process of an artwork. We weave together a meaningful tapestry by plaiting the threads of our past (including our past choices), which reveal a meaningful pattern of our present through which we base our choices in the perpetual unfolding of our future (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2002). Our life project is the foundation of our self-identity that endows us with a sense of purpose and direction (Thompson, 1998), and as such, gives rise to the notion of life themes (Mick and Buhl, 1992).

Constraining choices enable us to mark out the ‘field of possibility’. By making choices, we confer meaning on them by our very existence of being free (Langer, 1989). As such, freedom must be rooted in the world in which we commit ourselves to our life project and thereby transform ourselves and our circumstances in a durable way (Crossley, 2001). For Merleau-Ponty, the potential for resistance arises through intersubjective interactions with other body-subjects, whose mutual intentionality opens up choices and possibilities for transcendence. The stability of our *habitus* provides us with a sort of “ontological cocoon” (Giddens, 1991), where we are able to adopt, appropriate and resist shared cultural meanings (Thompson and Haytko, 1997). Our *habitus* is therefore
not a determining force; rather it creates a ‘situation’ through which we implement personal choices (Crossley, 1995). So, although consumers are subjected to the facticities of their given circumstances, (e.g. socio-historical, biological), this does not dictate how they are going to live their lives. Rather it provides them with a framework through which they are able to fashion their embodied narratives and thus personalize their world (eigenwelt) into a meaningful field of experiences (Thompson, 1998; Churchill and Wertz, 1985).

CONCLUSION

As consumer research continues to witness the burgeoning prominence of interpretive research (Sherry, 1991), as espoused more recently by Consumer Culture Theory (CCT), the discipline is beginning to acknowledge that consumers are incarnated beings whose embodied experience is paramount to the formation of theory (e.g. Thompson, 1998). As a methodology, phenomenology, has been well established over the years (e.g. Churchill and Wertz, 1985; Thompson, Pollio and Locander, 1989). As a philosophical concept, phenomenology is informed by numerous strands of thinking, which at times are contradictory, and therefore cannot be read in a totalizing manner. This paper therefore offers some insight into embodiment, from a Merleau-Pontyian perspective.

Unlike his contemporaries, Merleau-Pontyian phenomenology has the potential to create a dialogue with interpretive consumer researchers. For example, Merleau-Ponty’s ontology of the flesh emphasizes the notion of reversibility where binary constructs are reconfigured as dialectical and chiasmatic. Thus it is able to avoid the extremist and idealistic view of consumers without sliding into dualisms so often characterized by the work of his contemporaries (e.g. Sartrean absolute freedom; Husserlian’s transcendental ego). Through their CCT project, Arnould and Thompson for example have stressed the need to “push beyond the dichotomous opposition between sociological determinism and existential autonomy/autonomy (Sartre, 1956) or models of consumer which entail untenable and or culturally naïve models of sociological agency.” (2006: 11)

A Merleau-Pontyian account of embodiment, for example, upholds the call to acknowledge the dialectical interplay between agency and structure (Murray, 2002). It resonates with the CCT notion of consumers as embodied agents embedded within a network of marketplace cultures (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). Accordingly, consumers are able to forge a personalized identity project by resciripting the countervailing discourses emerging within their cultural frame of reference (Arnould and Thompson, 2006). As embodied subjects, consumers engage their ‘incarnate potentiality’ of being-in-the-world, to affect the formation and transformation of marketplace culture (Crossley, 1995; Thompson and Haytko, 1997). To reiterate Crossley (1995), embodied subject is the locus of action as well as the target of power.

The phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, not only enables researchers to explore how the configuration of discursive power shape consumers’ embodied experience but also how this is played out through the ‘work of the body’ as lived (Crossley, 1995). As such, a dialogue between the ‘lived’ and the ‘inscription’ perspective of the body can be facilitated, (Crossley, 1996), by transcending dualisms such as structure/agency, subject/object and mind/body inherent within traditional sociological inquiry (Arnould and Thompson, 2006; Murray, 2002). This paper has therefore raised a number of methodological and philosophical insights from a Merleau-Pontyian perspective in advancing consumer research to embrace the incarnated consumers. As such, researchers can begin to address the ‘quiet presence of the body’.

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ABSTRACT
This paper introduces Thompson’s Rubbish Theory (1979) to interpretive consumer research. The paper suggests the Theory is useful in foregrounding the material dimensions of markets. It also highlights the importance of thinking in terms of movement, flow and circulation in markets. Finally the theory suggests that value emerges through our ways of seeing and placing objects. A key critique of the theory is its neglect of the practices of value creation. Thus the paper draws from existing studies in consumer research in exploring three such sets of practices: finding objects, displaying objects, and transforming and re-using objects.

INTRODUCTION
This paper explores the possible contributions of Thompson’s Rubbish Theory to understandings of consumption. As such it might be seen as part of a broader movement within the discipline to centre ‘things’ more fully in accounts of consumption (Borgerson 2005, Dant 2005, Miller 2005). The focus on Rubbish Theory highlights the fact that much of value creation occurs beyond the first flush purchase of the new in the subsequent (re)uses, display and exchange of objects. Thus it focuses attention away from the moment of purchase and towards the ways in which objects are absorbed into our lives through cycles of (re)use. It also highlights the creativity of social actors in creating the conditions for value to emerge.

In his 2005 book ‘Materiality and Society’ Dant argues strongly for a closer focus on the ‘material stuff of life’ and observes that the mundane routine ways in which objects are taken up in everyday lives have been neglected. Of course such an approach regards the meanings of objects not as intrinsic to the objects themselves, but as socially and culturally (re)produced (see for example Miller 1998). Plenty of work in consumer research explores the ways in which goods might act as symbolic resources for lifestyle and identity construction (i.e. Belk 1988), but there is less reflection on the actual practices and activities through which goods become meaningful and valued. McCracken’s (1988) work on ‘Meaning Manufacture and Movement in the World of Goods’ begins to address this gap. He views advertising and the fashion system as instruments of meaning transfer between the culturally constituted world and consumer goods. He then suggests that a series of consumer rituals operate to transfer meanings from consumer goods to the individual consumer. These rituals include those of possession, exchange, grooming and divestment. The strengths of his argument include a focus on the mobile quality of meaning and some exploration of the instruments though which meaning is transferred. However he is not clear as to the practices which constitute these rituals. In addition his contention that ‘meaning resides in three locations: the culturally constituted world, the consumer good, and the individual consumer’ (1988: 89) fails to completely capture the complexity and fluidity of meaning movement. There is a linearity to his conceptualisation which misses the constant flux and flow of meanings in markets.

In ‘The Social Life of Things’ Appadurai (1986) highlights the restlessness of objects arguing that ‘from a methodological point of view it is things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social context.’ (1986: 5). Appadurai usefully observes that ‘commodities, like persons, have social lives’ (1986: 3). He argues that things move in and out of the commodity state throughout their lives, and rather than looking for distinctions between things which are commodities and things which are not, he focuses on the ‘commodity potential’ of things. Arguing that ‘the commodity situation in the social life of any “thing” be defined as the situation in which its exchangeability (past, present or future) for some other thing is its socially relevant feature’ (1986:13), Appadurai further proposes that ‘the commodity situation can be disaggregated into: the commodity phase of the social life of any thing, the commodity candidacy of any thing and the commodity context in which any thing may be placed.’ (1986: 13). The first of these ‘the commodity phase’ captures the way in which commodities move in and out of the commodity state throughout their lives. ‘things can move in and out of the commodity state, that such movements can be slow or fast, reversible or terminal, normative or deviant’ (1986: 13). However these movements do appear to be reduced to the opposites of commoditization and singularization, one might ask the question, does anything exist in-between? This is where Thompson’s Rubbish Theory comes in.

THOMPSON’S RUBBISH THEORY
Transients, Rubbish and Durables
In almost all contemporary debate where the consumption of goods and services is considered it is largely assumed that these possessable objects and experiences are of at least some value, it seems that the category of objects and experiences of no value (rubbish objects and experiences) is largely invisible. Thompson argues that the processes and contradictions involved in recognising rubbish are crucial to social life. He has a particular conception of rubbish, one which rather than seeing it as waste or even as the unwanted, views it as necessary to the wider system of valuation. For Thompson rubbish can only really be understood in relation to the categories of transient and durable. Indeed these two categories represent the visible and valued elements of material culture as opposed to the invisible and unvalued ‘rubbish’. It is important to note that these ‘categories’ ideally represent ways of seeing objects as opposed to substantive containers for them. The transient represents the usual state of commodities as objects which are declining in value and which have finite life spans. Whereas the durable increase in value over time and have (ideally) infinite life spans (1979: 7). Thompson uses the example of a used car as a transient and Queen Anne tallboy as a durable. He further observes that their category membership determines the way we act towards them.

Thompson argues that rubbish represents an important possible ‘in-between’ category in a ‘region of flexibility’ which is not subject to the same control mechanisms of the valuable and socially significant categories of transient and durable. Therefore it is ‘is able to provide the path for the seemingly impossible transfer of an object from transience to durability’ (1979: 9) he further suggests that ‘a transient object gradually declining in value and in expected life-span may slide across into rubbish’ (1979: 9) where it has the chance of being re-discovered, brought to light or cherished once again. Figure one demonstrates the possible paths an object may take (from transient to rubbish and from rubbish to durable).

The value of recognising ‘rubbish’
There are undoubtedly a number of important dimensions to recognising rubbish. In one sense it represents the residue of a post production society constantly reminding us of our ecological misdemeanours. In another sense it represents a category of objects
which embody a significant amount of potential for re-emergence through processes of recycling, re-use and re-absorption into everyday lives. Seen as residue it contains a reminder of past ways of living, past fashions, but also past routines and habits. Moran (2004) in considering 'the memory of rubbish' observes the deeply unsettling nature of rubbish objects:

> These objects are disconcerting because they are located at the end of a temporal process which, caught up in the cyclical rhythms of daily habit, we were not even aware was occurring. Amidst the leftover material of daily life, we encounter the unsettling evidence that routines have histories (2004: 63).

As Thompson observes, by its nature, rubbish is consistently over-looked, bearing no, or in some cases negative, value. Its visibility and presence also results from its placing (see Douglas’ 1966 conception of dirt as ‘matter out of place’). Thompson comments that we only notice rubbish when it is in the wrong place, and highlights the embarrassment and anxiety that mis-placed rubbish, or rubbish which has found its way in to the wrong place can cause ‘Something which has been discarded, but never threatens to intrude, does not worry us at all.’ (1979: 92) but rubbish in the wrong place is ‘emphatically visible and extremely embarrassing’ (1972: 92). In considering practices and conduits of household disposal Gregson et al (forthoming) similarly emphasise the ‘placing’ of unwanted things. They observe that these placings are about wanting to do something with and to things. Rubbish objects are things that are no longer used or loved or cared for and often no longer seen. Rubbish objects linger on the periphery of our lives, in the back of the drawer, bottom of the wardrobe or cupboard, corner of the garage or garden shed gathering dust.

From the objects point of view then a certain degree of patience is required, they must wait until they are re-discovered or begin what is often a restless journey through a range of sites and spaces, the jumble sale, junk shop or charity shop until they are ‘moved on’ again. Freund’s (1994) story explores the experiences a Chippendale table collects during its lifetime, observing that ‘uncertainty plagues the lives of most things’ This discussion of the table’s career emphasises some of the means by which objects fall in and out of place during their lives. The table moves from owner to owner and moves in and out of use. At the end of the story the table is gifted to a museum, a place that Freund deems to be relatively stable and secure.

> ‘In the course of its life, the Willing table had been passed down from one uninterested relation to the next. It had moved from the servants quarters, to a box in the dark, dry basement, and finally into the house of a great-great-great Grandson. Luck brought it there, and kept it polished, and made it appreciated. When Phebe Newhall’s Grandson died, the table’s future was again uncertain. In the life of a thing there is no safer home than a museum.’ (Freund, 1994: 55).

Rubbish is also persistent, it never actually completely goes away, we are never completely able to rid ourselves of it. Munro (1995) and Hetherington (2004) explore this quality of rubbish arguing that it continually exerts an absent presence. Rubbish, it may also be argued, requires a significant amount of work for its management. Like dust in the home it constantly builds up and needs dealing with but all we seem to be able to do is to move it elsewhere. Thompson argues that this persistence causes problems, problems which result from dis-junction between the economic decay and physical decay of things, i.e. they hang around long after they are deemed to have economic value.

> ‘In an ideal world… an object would reach zero value and zero expected life-span at the same instant, and then disappear into dust. But, in reality, it usually does not do this; it just continues to exist in a timeless and valueless limbo, where, at some later date (if it has not by that time turned, or been made, into dust) it has the chance of being discovered’ (1979: 8-9)

This focus on the possibility of discovery is important to consumer researchers as it highlights the opportunist nature of some markets. Indeed this is also what makes for some excitement when searching for the elusive discovery, the object that has been ‘rubbished’ by others but that can be brought to light through the exercise of new or different sets of knowledge. In this sense the

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**FIGURE 1**

Thompson’s Rubbish Theory

[Diagram of Transient and Durable Rubbish with Practices of Finding, Displaying, Transforming and Re-using]
operation of expert (and in many cases specialised) knowledges is central in driving some markets particularly for example for antiques or collectors items.

The Practices of Value Creation: From Rubbish to Durable

The above consideration of rubbish suggests that it is an integral part of social life and a key conduit through which objects may move from the transient to durable category. However, a key critique of Thompson’s Rubbish Theory is that he leaves us unsure as to the specific practices which effect this movement of things (and thus creates value). Therefore three such sets of practices are explored below, they include: finding objects, displaying objects and transforming and re-using objects. It is argued that each of these sets of practices changes the way we see an object moving it from being seen as a ‘rubbish object’ of no value to a ‘durable object’ of increasing value (see figure 1). In considering each of these sets of practices illustrations are drawn from existing studies in consumer research.

Finding Objects

One key way in which objects may slide from the category of rubbish to durable is through the act of finding. Indeed the concept of ‘the find’ appears central to much consumption activity in the realm of the non-new. Hunting for bargains at car boot sales, flea markets and in charity shops is all about the prospect of the find (see Sherry 1990a, 1990b, Soiffer amd Herrmann 1987, Gregson and Crewe 1997).

Indeed, Gabriel and Lang (1995) include the ‘Consumer as Explorer’ as one of many possible consumer identities. Their conception of bargain hunting as ‘a secret of getting something for nothing in a world where everything has to be paid for’ (1995: 67) suggests a degree of ‘triumph against the system’. However locating the concept of the find squarely within the marketplace is too limiting for our purposes here. What, then might one mean by ‘the find’? Ultimately the find relates to discovery, and suggests that something has been otherwise overlooked, ignored or hidden away. The find may not involve objects which are new to us, it is possible to find some of ones own items if they have been hidden away long enough in an attic and thus made strange to us. The concept of the find may not involve objects which are new to us, it is possible to find some of ones own items if they have been hidden away long enough in an attic and thus made strange to us. The concept of the find also suggests that the found object has some qualities that others (or indeed ourselves) have in the past overlooked, as such it is closely related to ‘bringing to light’. The find may be extended to embrace features of objects as well as objects themselves. This directs us to their ‘potentialities’, objects may have been there all along but we’ve suddenly found them to be useful, likeable or beautiful. It might be that some aspect of them has simply been brought to our attention. Equally, as discussed below in relation to transforming objects, we may make alterations to objects which bring out their potential. The transition from thing of little or no value (rubbish), to thing of value (durable) can result form a relatively minor shift in the way we see something.

Displaying Objects

Discussion of practices of display needs to be couched within the wider moves within the economy towards the aestheticisation of social relations and increasing emphases on presentation (Bohme 2003, Carr and Hancock, 2003, Featherstone 1991). A range of institutions impact upon and react with ‘meanings for and of display’ cultural intermediaries such as interior designers and fashion designers play a central role here in directing our ways of seeing (Crewe and Beaverstock, 1998, Cronin 2004). However we can also explore the practices of display on a much more localised level. Hurdley (2006) observes the accomplishment of social and moral identities through practices of display within the home sphere. She finds that families use a range of focal points for the display of objects which narrate family and individual stories, in particular the mantelpiece and the wall space above the mantelpiece. Although she does not deal directly with this in the paper these placings of objects have significance for the way in which they are valued. Here we can begin to reflect on the significance of front spaces in the home such as hall ways and sitting rooms in relation to the back spaces of bedrooms, back stairs and cellars.

Leach’s (2002) work on ‘At Home with Art’ also explores the home space as a site of display but alerts us to the ‘long history of meanings for display in homes which impact upon what gets allowed in and where it is put or what is done with it once it arrives’ (2002: 156).

Transforming and Re-using Objects

A focus on the transformation of objects also allows us some purchase on the sorts of practices that may re-enliven rubbish objects. These transformations may involve creating new uses for old things to fit in with contemporary lifestyles for example the use of old bathtubs as garden planters or church pews as dining benches. Transformations may also involve the modification or updating of objects through painting, alteration or repair. Transformations may not only be based around creating new uses but also creating new looks. Fashions (vintage, retro, kitsch) may offer opportunities to re-inscribe objects with value (see Gregson and Crewe 2003). Palmer and Clark’s (2005) edited collection ‘Old Clothes, New Looks’ explores the ‘contemporary refashioning’ of clothing to create new and unique sets of identities for the owner and wearer. Tranberg-Hansen’s work (1999, 2000) which explores used clothing practices in Lusaka’ highlights the importance of practices of appropriation in investing objects with meaning. Work by Herrmann (1997) in the context of the U.S. garage sale similarly explores these processes (see also Soiffer and Herrmann 1987). The re-use of objects also creates value for things that otherwise would be allowed to slip away (or slide terminally into the rubbish category). As such re-use is closely related to the practice of ‘gleaning’ (Maclaran and Meamber 2002). Gleaning suggests an active raking through of objects and thus highlights the work that may go into re-appropriating and re-using objects. But it also emphasises the gathering, scavenging or re-using of items left behind by others (see Hill and Stamey, 1990). The re-use of and creation of new uses for objects of course also has positive ecological implications, ones which the ‘slow consumption’ movement are at pains to promote (Cooper 2005).

CONCLUSIONS

Rubbish Theory attempts a comprehensive theory of value through a focus on the biographies, movements and transformations of objects. This paper has found that the Theory is useful to consumer researchers in three key ways. First it helps us to explore more fully the material dimensions of markets thus contributing to a ‘thingly turn’ in the study of consumption (Borgerson 2005, Dant 2005, Miller 2005). Second it highlights the importance of thinking in terms of movement, flow and circulation and moves us away from means-end, supply-demand, production-consumption lineairities in thinking through the consumption process. Third it suggests that value, rather than being an inbuilt property of an object, emerges through our ways of seeing and placing objects.

We are used to exploring the role of objects as resources in individual’s lives, perhaps they way in which they move in and out of our field of vision. But in acknowledging the social life of things we might explore the career of the object as it traverses a universe of people. Further research would trace lives of objects, casting studies of consumption as one moment in the wider life of a thing.
In particular further work might explore the role of institutions in influencing the valuation of a type of object asking how the category boundaries of rubbish and durable are policed in our contemporary culture. Here we might see art critics and dealers, antique dealers, museum curators etc as working hard at the edges of the durable category to keep some objects inside and some firmly outside. There is also more work to be done on the relations between individual and collective valuations—what role is there for individuality (or perhaps eccentric evaluations)?

Acknowledging the centrality of practice in the process of value creation moves researchers away from an over emphasis on semiotics and representation. It requires an in-depth exploration of what consumers actually do with objects as they absorb them into their lives. Such a focus acknowledges that the creation and maintenance of value cannot be reduced to the moment of the economic transaction. It also highlights the creativity and resourcefulness of consumers particularly in translating objects from rubbish to durable.

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Perceived Price Fairness and Perceived Transaction Value
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Price fairness is a consumer’s assessment of and related emotions regarding whether the difference between a seller’s price and the price of a comparative other party in a transaction is reasonable, acceptable or justifiable (Xia, Monroe, Cox 2004). A price fairness judgment most likely will be based on comparative transactions involving different parties such as other customers, customers own previous experience, or other sellers. A concept that is closely related to price fairness is transaction value. Transaction value is defined as the consumers’ perceptions of the psychological satisfaction or pleasure obtained when taking advantage of the financial terms of the price deal. Like fairness perceptions, transaction value is derived from a comparison between the price paid and the buyer’s reference price. Perceptions of fairness and transaction utility both have been demonstrated to influence consumer behavior such as purchase intentions (Grewal, Monroe and Krishnan 1998; Campbell 1999). However, will a good deal always be perceived to be a fair price? Or will a perceived unfair price always be perceived to be a bad deal?

When consumers compare the price that they have paid to a reference price the result is either the prices are equal or not. If the two prices are perceived to be equal then that situation is referred to as equality. When a price is perceived to be less than the reference price, then that situation is referred to as disadvantaged inequality. When a price is perceived to be more than the reference price, then that is referred to as disadvantaged inequality. We propose that perceptions of price fairness and transaction value are similar when consumers are in a condition of disadvantaged inequality. A disadvantaged inequality is perceived as unfair as well as offering less transaction value relative to an equality condition. However, when consumers are in a condition of advantaged inequality, we propose that consumers will perceive the price offer as providing more transaction value but to be less fair than equality. Further, perceptions of price fairness and transaction value share similarity in the asymmetry effect between advantaged and disadvantaged inequality conditions. Given the same magnitude of price difference, consumers will perceive a disadvantaged price inequality situation to be more unfair as well as providing less transaction value than an advantaged inequality price situation. Finally, we propose that the difference between perceptions of price fairness and transaction value in the condition of advantaged inequality is driven by a social comparison effect and moderated by type of comparative reference as well as the characteristics of price differences when multiple price references are present.

Two experiments were conducted. Study one examined the effects of comparative references on perceptions of price fairness and transaction value. We used an experimental design of a 3 (price difference: higher, lower, or same as the focal customer) x 3 (comparative reference: other customer, other seller, or self). Participants read a shopping scenario where they were looking for a DVD player. Before placing their order, they went to the store’s chat room and asked people who recently had bought the same product from this store to provide the price information. Two people responded to the inquiry, offering comparative prices. The two reference prices were manipulated as equal to, $30 or $60 higher, or $30 or $60 lower than the price that the focal consumer was quoted. After reading the scenario, participants responded to measures of fairness and transaction value.

To test the effects of multiple comparison references Study 2 was a 5 (first reference price) x 5 (second reference price) factorial design. Participants first read a scenario where they were considering buying a DVD player. Before placing their order, they went to the store’s chat room and asked people who recently had bought the same product from this store to provide the price information. Two people responded to the inquiry, offering comparative prices. The two reference prices were manipulated as equal to, $30 or $60 higher, or $30 or $60 lower than the price that the focal consumer was quoted. After reading the scenario, participants responded to measures of fairness and transaction value.

Overall, the findings empirically demonstrated some similarities and differences between perceptions of fairness and transaction value. First, the results demonstrated the asymmetry effect of advantaged and disadvantaged price inequality on both fairness and transaction value judgments. In addition, an advantaged price inequality led to different judgments for fairness and transaction value: it produced positive transaction value but was perceived as less fair than an equal price. More interestingly, the less fair perception produced by an advantaged price relative to an equal price was moderated by type of comparative reference. It was significant only when comparing with another customer.

Further, consistent with the “loss looms larger” principle, the effect of knowing that another person paid more than oneself while a second person paid less than oneself leads to a perception of unfair rather than fair. As a result, the overall judgment in this situation is unfair compared to when the two references paid prices equal to the consumer. In addition, study 2 showed that the difference between fairness and transaction value was moderated by the joint nature of multiple references. When one of the references produced disadvantaged inequality, the fairest condition was when the other customer paid a higher price instead of an equal price. We reason that when consumers are disadvantaged, they are more concerned with their own loss instead of empathizing with the other customer who is disadvantaged. Indeed, consumers will edit and combine the multiple prices in a way to make themselves happiest.

Most price fairness research has focused on the condition when consumers are disadvantaged. This research shows that advantaged prices also induce unfair price perceptions although, as expected, the effect is smaller than disadvantaged prices. More interestingly, we showed that such an effect was driven by the effect of social comparison. Future research can further examine the influence of the social relationships of the comparative parties on the effect of advantaged versus equal price. This research shows that perceptions of fairness and transaction value are two closely related concepts. They go hand-in-hand when consumers are disadvantaged but are in different directions when consumers are advantaged. Such differences are moderated by the nature of comparative parties and the number of references.
The Effects of Contextual Prices on Consumers’ Brand Evaluation: A Test of Alternative Models
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Consumer’s price evaluation is often susceptible to other price information available in a decision context (e.g., Janiszewski and Lichtenstein 1999; Niedrich, Sharma, and Wedell 2001). For example, consumers use prices of other alternatives in the given or evoked choice set as their reference prices and incorporate this information into their evaluation of the target price (e.g., Rajendran and Tellis 1994). Prior research has proposed various theories explaining the reference price effects. These theories include adaptation-level theory (Helson 1964), range theory (Volkmaan 1951) and range-frequency theory (Parducci 1961). These theories differ in terms of which specific reference price information plays the most important role in affecting consumer price evaluation. First, adaptation-level theory suggests that consumer’s evaluation of the target price is influenced mainly by the relative position of the target to the arithmetic or geometric average (i.e., adaptation-level) of the contextual prices. Second, range theory proposes that the relative distance of the target to the extreme prices in the given context price range is the most important influencing factor. Finally, range-frequency theory claims that the reference price effect can be best explained by the weighted average of the target price’s relative distance to the extreme prices and its rank within the given price set (e.g., the 3rd or 5th most expensive option among all the prices presented).

While the past research focuses on the superiority of a particular model over the others, little research has been done to identify the moderating factors. We put forth that whether consumers rely on the average, range or frequency information depends on the type of decisions they are asked to make. This is due to the compatibility between the cognitive processing called for by different decision tasks and the process underlying the specific reference effects. Specifically, if the decision task promotes the use of continuous processing, as in the case of the price attractiveness rating, the range of the contextual prices will play a more important role. On the other hand, if the decision involves a dichotomous processing, as in the case of deciding whether or not to purchase the target brand, the adaptation-level or the frequency effect will be more prominent. Further, we suggest which of the two features (average vs. ranking) will prevail in the purchase decision task depends on the format in which context price information is presented (e.g., ascending or random order).

These predictions were tested in three lab studies. In all three studies, the average (i.e., adaptation-level), the highest and lowest price (i.e., range), or the ordinal rank of the target (i.e., frequency) within the list of contextual prices is systematically and independently manipulated across experimental conditions. In study 1 and 2, participants are asked to view a list of prices of other brands in the same product category and then presented with a target brand with price information alone. Subsequently, they were asked to make a judgment with respect to the target brand and the type of judgment differs depending on the assigned condition. There are three different judgment conditions: product attractiveness rating, purchase intention rating, and purchase/no purchase choice condition. In the product attractiveness rating condition, subjects are asked to rate the target brand in terms of its attractiveness on a 7-point scale anchored by “not at all attractive” and “very attractive”. In the purchase intention condition, subjects rate their likelihood of purchasing the target brand using a 7-point scale anchored by “not at all likely to purchase” and “very likely to purchase”. Lastly, in the purchase/no purchase condition, subjects make a choice of whether or not to purchase the target brand using a dichotomous scale (i.e., yes or no).

The findings from the three studies support our hypotheses. Consistent with our predictions, study 1 results show that, in the attractiveness rating condition, the manipulation of the lowest and the highest context prices exerts a significant impact while both the change in the average context price and the ranking of the target price did not have a significant impact. In contrast, in both purchase intention and purchase/no purchase decision tasks, the rank order of the target has a strong effect on subject’s judgment. However, no significant effect was observed in the range or the average condition.

Study 2 examines the condition under which the average model over the frequency model will prevail in the purchase decision task. The study procedure was similar to that of study 1 except that we decreased the number of context prices from 10 to 6 and added the condition where the reference prices are presented in jumbled order. In line with our expectation, we found the adaptation (vs. frequency) model better accounts for subjects judgments regarding both purchase intention and purchase/no purchase choice.

Study 3 extends the testing of the context effect to the situation where price evaluations are made given other product attributes in addition to the price. A total of 16 brand descriptions were generated as a Latin-square combination of four price levels and two product features with four levels for each attribute. The range and shape of the price distribution vary across three conditions. Participants decided whether or not to consider purchasing each brand. Thus, the task is identical to the purchase decision condition except that the decisions are for all brands included in the stimulus set. An analysis of the choice probability for each price level across price distribution conditions indicates that the purchase probabilities fit better to the adaptation-level model than the range or frequency model. The result replicates the findings of study 2, since the average context price has a stronger influence on brand purchase decisions when there are a small number of price levels presented in random order.

In conclusion, our research extended the previous studies by examining the moderating effect of decision tasks on the relative suitability of each reference price effect model. We propose that the compatibility of the context information with the decision task explains the contextual price effect. We believe that current research enriches our knowledge on the influence of external price on consumer judgments and provides an interesting avenue for future research.

References


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Although the impact of price presentation on consumer price perceptions has been studied in the past, such studies have generally ignored any evaluation of how the physical representation of price cues in an ad (using ad execution elements such as size or color) affects consumer judgments. In this study, we examine the effect of relative font sizes of pricing cues in print advertisements where both regular and sale price information is provided. In the context of print ads that have both regular price and sale price information, we attempt to answer the following questions: (a) Does the relative size of price information make a difference?, (b) If yes, what are some possible underlying mechanisms to explain the effect?, and (c) Is there any dominant format that practitioners can use to maximize perceived value of a deal?

Drawing on research in information processing and numeric cognition, we propose that changing the relative size of price cues affects the accessibility of those cues and the two price cues (regular and sale price) serve diagnostic purposes for two important mediating variables–normal price estimate and message processing of the ad.

We argue that the relative sizes of price cues in the comparative price advertisement affect two components of deal evaluation: perceived savings and situational sensitivity to the offered deal. Making the regular price more salient will affect perceived savings while making the sale price more salient will increase sensitivity to the deal offered in the ad. Both of these affect deal evaluation and willingness to buy.

We used a sample of 231 undergraduate students at a Midwestern university. The ad stimulus was for a Canon digital camera. The price cues in the ad were realistic and based on real average market prices (regular price: $299.99; sale price $179.99) for the advertised model. The ad stimuli were created so that the larger font was always 150-point and the smaller font was always 50-point.

Most of the hypotheses were supported. As the proportion of the ad space occupied by the price information went up, the amount of attention paid to the message went up. Increasing the size of the regular price (keeping everything else constant) resulted in a significant increase in the normal price estimate of subjects, which, in turn affected perceived savings. On the other hand, increasing the size of the sale price relative to the regular price increased sensitivity to the deal and then positively affected deal evaluations.

Making the regular price salient relative to the sale price boosts normal price estimates but lowers deal sensitivity. On the other hand, making sale price salient relative to the regular price boosts deal sensitivity, but at the expense of the boost in subjects’ normal price estimates. As a result of these opposite effects, switching the salience of these price cues appears to have no overall effect on value perceptions purchase intention.

This study demonstrates the psychological mechanism by which changing the size of the price cue influences purchase intention through its effects on intervening variables (normal price estimates and message processing). What is more interesting about these findings is that the two effects cannot be had simultaneously. Thus, while it is beneficial to increase the relative size of the sale price cue or the regular price cue in a print ad, the two advantages cannot be garnered simultaneously. One can either increase the normal price estimate by increasing the size of the regular price cue, or increase the deal sensitivity by increasing the size of the sale price cue.

References


SESSION SUMMARY

Issues of adult consumer socialization and transitions between stages of the family life cycle have received insufficient attention from consumer researchers (Ekström 2006; Commuri and Gentry 2000). Our goal for the session was to stimulate debate, discussion and further research surrounding consumption’s part in adult role transitions, particularly within the family. Our three independent studies—of expectant mothers, new mothers, and fathers who have become single parents—share an interpretive approach, a view of parenthood as a human construction and a social institution, and of parental behaviour as shaped by processes of socialization and internalization (LaRossa 1986). The first paper (Banister et al) focused on individual experiences, exploring how new British mothers use consumption in the process of self-determination. The second paper (Harrison and Gentry) analysed accounts of American single fathers and their children about their household consumption experiences. Finally, Davies et al explored how the consumption patterns and aspirations of new mothers in the US, UK, Ireland, and Denmark were shaped by their social networks. Although each paper addressed different cultural contexts and circumstances, taken together they offer insights into consumption-related experiences of men and women as they negotiate changing family or household composition, in several different cultural contexts.

ABSTRACTS

“The Self-Determination Processes of New Mothers”

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The challenges to identity posed by pregnancy and motherhood have generated considerable research interest (Smith 1999). The transition to motherhood (Goldberg 1988:2) involves changing identities and roles as women experience significant alterations to their patterns of consumption and work/life balance (e.g. Fursman 2002). Little attention has been paid to the role of consumption, choice and resistance in relation to identity negotiation, self-determination processes and motherhood. We address this research gap by examining the role that consumption plays in the self-determination processes of new mothers. Our research objectives were to:

1. Identify the experiences which women have and the choices they make or resist (as mothers-to-be and new mothers) in order to establish how they aligned the acceptance or rejection of different experiences with their preferred views of mothering (the mother I want to be; the mother I don’t want to be: i.e. ideal versus undesired)
2. Examine how women as new mothers experienced societal and social pressures on consumption choices and behaviour (e.g. from regulatory bodies; government recommendations; support groups, family) in order to identify the strategies which women use either to reconcile or to resist the social discourses of ‘good mothering’ (ought self) with their own experience and feelings.

We used semi-structured interviews with twelve first time mothers to explore their experiences of motherhood and the consumption choices they made or resisted. The topics included experiences and practices around pregnancy, birth, breastfeeding, immunization, consumption (for child and/or for mother), allocation of resources (e.g. childcare, cleaning and ironing services), and discourses from personal, social and societal networks about what constituted ‘a good mother’. Interviews lasted between forty-five minutes and two hours. They were all taped and transcribed. The interviews were then written up as cases. Data analysis consisted of both researchers iterating between and across the cases, identifying emerging categories, and also examining existing categories derived from the literature review; and eliciting the key themes from the narratives.

We use a set of narratives around one of the key experiences of early mothering, breast feeding, to illustrate women’s different sense of their possible selves (Markus and Nurius 1986) (ideal, actual, ought and undesired (Ogilvie 1987)) and their strategies of compliance or resistance to social/societal discourses. Feeding their babies proved to be a source of either tremendous self-fulfillment (the ideal self) or disappointment (the undesired self), accompanied by clear notions of what should be achieved in this key test of motherhood (ought self).

We saw how these women experienced a range of social discourses, particularly from family, friends and health professionals, about what constituted ‘a good mother’ across a range of activities (e.g. labour and delivery; sleeping patterns) and consumption practices (e.g. being environmentally aware in their use of nappies; use of dummies; choice of childcare). These experiences started from before their babies were born, and continued throughout the first three years of their children’s lives. Many of our interviewees’ actual experiences of mothering (actual self) did not align with their hopes and expectations of mothering (ideal self), or the kind of mother they thought they should be (ought self), and sometimes involved aspects of mothering they had originally hoped to avoid or reject (undesired self). As their children got older, and they grew in confidence in their mothering roles, they found it easier to resist the social discourses of ‘good mothering’.

This research contributes to our understanding of consumer self-determination processes, and of the acceptance or rejection of goods, services and brands linked to different aspects of the mothering self (ideal, ought and undesired).

“Single Fathers and Household Production and Consumption: Their Story, and Their Children’s”

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The single-parent household is the fastest growing household type in the US, and within that segment, single fathers are increasing at a much faster clip than single mothers. Consumer research has largely ignored single parents in general, and single fathers in particular, along with other household types such as step-families, second families, co-habiting households, and gay and lesbian households. Luckily, there are richer literatures within sociology that have dealt with these family types and can provide a baseline for consumer researchers, as household consumption and production issues permeate household existence, regardless of the structure.

We have conducted a study of single fathers’ adaptation to the full time responsibility role for their children. Lareau (2000) found fathers to perceive themselves as involved parents when in a two-
parent household, but also found that most did not know the names of their children’s friends. Lareau (2000, p. 417) found fathers to be “helpers of mothers,” recruited, directed, and monitored by mothers, with their family contributions consisting of “hanging out,” laughter, transmission of life skills, and conversational dominance. The nature of their contributions changes greatly when they no longer have a spouse around. We found that fathers can and do develop into effective parents, but we also found that our “story” was not new. In fact, Thompson (1986, pp. 83-84) summarized it very accurately two decades ago:

These interview studies of single fathers characterized the first year of transition as being especially stressful, with fathers required to negotiate personal problems (loneliness, depression) as well as the reorganization of the household. … While some managed to modify their working hours and responsibilities, others suffered financial difficulties from reducing their work hours or, in a few cases, quitting work altogether to become full-time caregivers. Following this initial period, however, these studies almost uniformly reported that fathers felt increasingly competent and successful in their new domestic responsibilities. Very few fathers employed housekeepers or babysitters; most assumed cooking, cleaning, and caregiving demands by themselves, and most reported enjoying, to some extent, these new obligations….To be sure, some fathers voiced concern over their ability to provide for the child’s emotional needs (e.g., nurturance), and the fathers of daughters were concerned with the child’s sexuality and the lack of an appropriate female role model at home, especially as girls reached puberty. On the whole, fathers reported substantial satisfaction with their adjustment to single fathering….By and large, they had little preparation for assuming domestic and child-care responsibilities.

One problem with previous work, noted by Thompson (1986), is that only the fathers’ stories have been obtained, and not the children’s. The general path leading to empowerment may reflect efforts on the father’s part to justify his efforts, with questionable perceptions existing in terms of his successes. We have interviewed offspring of our informants in order to rectify that situation.

While we are breaking new ground, we must note that we are doomed to small samples. Finding single fathers living with their children and no other adults is not an easy task. Getting the fathers’ permission subsequently to interview their children presents another problem, as does the factor that some of the children were too young to provide meaningful insights (some were six or younger). So our findings will deal with insights gained from 16 single-father informants and eight child informants.

In most ways, the father/child stories converged quite well. One issue that fathers had not discussed but that was raised by child informants who had been too young to drive when the single-father household was formed was that of transportation difficulties. We speculate that transportation duties had already been part of the fathers’ roles, but that they did not realize that their increased time burdens and their lack of spousal support in the area had such damaging effects on the child’s perceived mobility. The children most noted decrements in the quality of meals, but the fathers were aware of that. Also, most kids missed having the nurturance offered by mothers. Their fathers would listen, but were prone to say “just handle it” rather than show empathy. On the other hand, many of our father informants also noted deficiencies in this area, some quite explicitly. Thus, we conclude that the fathers’ stories of their adjustment to highly involved parents were supported by their children’s perspectives.

“Guiding, Chiding and Providing? Consumption and the Social Networks of Expectant Mothers”
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The ways in which consumption is bound up with the experiences of new and expectant mothers has until recently received little research attention (Prothero 2002; Taylor et al 2004). This particular transition to motherhood remains a “journey into the unknown” (Oakley 1979), propelling women towards the private realm of mothering experiences and the public realm of motherhood as an institution (Rich 1977). With so much at stake, and so much uncertainty, consumption might be expected to offer reassurance, but this particular consumption domain also constitutes alien territory. Our paper explores how pregnant women buy into motherhood, both literally and figuratively, and the consumer socialization processes involved. As Ekström (2006) observes, researchers need to address the complexity arising from new forms of social interaction and the co-existence of multiple socialization agents. The path to motherhood is a particularly rich site for exploring such issues. Whilst we may expect family and friends to play a major role, the importance of books and the internet as sources of information and support for expectant and new mothers has also been documented (O’Malley et al 2006; O’Connor and Madge 2004). Magazines, television programmes, advertising and sales staff may also shape expectant and new mothers’ consumption experiences and aspirations.

This paper draws on an ongoing interpretive study of the relationship between consumption, identity and experience amongst new mothers in Denmark, Ireland, the UK, and the USA. Our focus here is on twenty mothers, recruited during the last trimester of pregnancy through our own social networks, who kept a diary and took photographs of what they acquired and were interviewed before and after their babies were born. Although our analysis is still in progress, issues of social support have emerged as an important theme. Although almost all the women we interviewed had partners, they typically saw themselves as having primary responsibility for acquiring baby-related goods. This was an onerous and often overwhelming task, requiring them to manage vast quantities of information and advice. Many socialization agents were evident, with friends and family complementing—and sometimes competing with-commercial and mediated sources of knowledge, opinion and advice. Gifts and second-hand items also emerged as key socialization agents. In general, across the four countries, consumer socialization of expectant mothers appears to involve guiding, chiding and providing.

One of the most striking findings to emerge was the bittersweet nature of all this for our participants; their accounts of such social interaction were rife with ambivalence (Otnes et al 1997). On the one hand, receiving information, advice, gifts and second-hand items was reassuring and empowering, encouraging expectant mothers to feel in control, prepared, and able to cope with the challenges ahead. Receiving them also represented and indeed developed social bonds between mothers, across or within generations. However, our participants had come to realize that there was no single, one-size-fits-all interpretive community of mothering or motherhood, since values, identities, and circumstances varied considerably from one generation, and indeed one mother, to the next. Faced with conflicting advice and assumptions across a whole
range of issues, they realized that they had to take responsibility for deciding what was best for them. This had to be done tactfully: after all they were mere novices, and their fledgling “mother’s instinct” was not necessarily valued or validated by those who were already mothers. Thus there were many accounts of advice or information being imposed rather than invited, and conflicting, inappropriate or worrying rather than constructive or reassuring. Similarly, some of the gifts and second-hand items that they received were problematic. Symbolically, they sometimes represented contested identities and values concerning the right way to “do” motherhood. On a more practical level, our participants discussed how and why they had problems turning down offers of unwanted second-hand items.

Overall, this paper shows how the journey to motherhood involves negotiating complexity, in terms of social relations as well as consumer goods. It also demonstrates the contribution of interpretive methods to our understanding of lived experiences of adult consumer socialization.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Relationship marketing has increased in importance during the past years and two branches within relationship marketing have evolved. One school of thought portrays relationships to be important under any circumstances, others, claim that only certain types of relationships are worth building, whereas others are not worth invested in, and should even be dissolved (Storbakka, 2004). The view arises from the fact that long-term customers that firms have relationships with may not be necessarily more profitable than short-time customers (Łęszynski et al. 1995; Reinartz and Kumar 2000, 2002) and that all customers may not be interested in developing relationships with firms (Grönroos 1997). Taking the latter view implies seeing customers as potentially being in different stages of relationships, in which customers in different relationship levels are differently receptive towards marketing messages and relational efforts. Identifying relationship stages is an effort which has not been undertaken in the literature, although it would be valuable to know what a relationship is based on. So far, research effort has focused on estimating the financial value of customers, thereby determining which ones are worth keeping, or on examining if there is a tendency among customers to engage in a relationship with the firm (De Wulf, Odekerken-Schröder and Iacobucci 2001; Storbakka 1994). Merely knowing the financial value of a customer does not reveal his/her motives for engaging in a relationship, and knowing that a tendency to relationship does not reveal what the relationship is based on, as reasons for having it could be of multiple kinds (liking the product to the brand, for example). In this paper, we focus on examining different types of relationships that customers may have with firms, and the drivers for engaging in such relationships. We propose a model separating between three different levels of relationships, ranging from product-level, to brand-level and ultimately firm-level relationships. A passive relational mode is likely to be targeted towards a particular product. A product-customer relationship is the lowest level of intimacy that customers may have, and is easily established by the purchase of a product. The next step, an active relational mode, takes place when the customer starts developing a relationship with the brand, and goes beyond the purchase of a single product to preferring the brand to others in the category. Finally, the third type of relationship occurs when customers wish to be involved with the firm, and repeteadly purchase from that firm across a range of products. This stage is the firm-level relationship, and is referred to as relationship proneness.

We used PLS, partial least squares, to test our hypothesised model (Brown and Chin, 2004). PLS is a structural equation modelling technique that uses a principal component-based estimation approach (Brown and Chin, 2004). PLS was chosen because PLS, compared to other covariance-based analysing tools, like AMOS and LISREL, put minimal demands on measurement scales, sample size, and residual distributions (Chin, Marcolin, and Newsted, 2003). PLS is suitable for exploratory research (Chin, Marcolin, and Newsted, 2003) where it can suggest where relationships might or might not exist and to suggest propositions for later testing. Second, PLS assumes that all the measured variance is useful variance to be explained. Third, PLS is also a good analysing strategy if the tested model includes latent constructs. Furthermore, PLS does not require normally distributed data.

Results suggest that different types of relationships exist, and provide support for the relationship continuum. According to the model, the customer advances from having a relationship with a product, towards having one with the brand, and finally with the firm, which ultimately lead to commitment towards the firm. By separating between three different relationship levels, we propose that customers may be in any of these stages. Further, we suggest a relationship hierarchy, in which the customer gradually moves towards more intimate level of relationships with firms, starting with the initial fascination with a product to a deep, committed, relationship with a firm. Relationship marketing strategies are thus more complex than simply separating between transactional and relational customers. It also involves managing customers in different types of relationships. Our results also suggest that without a good product, a relationship may never evolve. By targeting the right type of customers, relationship strategies become enhanced, and firms can recognize the motivations customers have for engaging in a relationship with them. Firms that succeed in targeting the right type of customers with the correct marketing message are likely to save time, effort, and monetary resources. Targeting customers that are receptive towards marketing messages with relational efforts is likely to be fruitful, whereas targeting customers in a passive relational model might cause irritation and loss of privacy, as customers may not want the firm to who they are and what they have purchased. This model has implications for the relationship-marketing paradigm, since it helps to clarify the linkage and path between the product, the firm and ultimately commitment. For future research, we recommend examining different types of relationship levels, and acknowledging that customers on different relationship levels may respond differently to marketing messages.

References

Love at First Sight or a Long-term Affair? Different Relationship Levels as Predictors of Customer Commitment

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Consumers often purchase and pay capacity-constrained services, such as concert tickets, car rental, and education courses, long before these services are actually performed (Shugan and Xie 2000, 2004; Xie and Shugan 2001; Patrick and Park 2006; Prelec and Loewenstein 1998). The time span between consumer’s purchase and the actual performance of the service may vary from one day to several months. For example, consumers may sometimes prepay tickets for popular concerts months in advance but for local events just one day ahead. However, due to exogenous influences, consumers may decide to cancel the service. For example, an unexpected snow storm which is forecasted on the way to a concert leads to an unfavorable circumstance and consumers consider canceling their concert tickets. In this paper, we concentrate on such exogenous influences as moderators of unfavorable circumstances which may induce service cancellation.

Our research focuses on how to explain the consumers’ likelihood of service cancellation as a function of the timing of prepayment in terms of payment depreciation, the refund in case of service cancellation, the price of the service, and consumption enthusiasm.

Prior research suggests that consumers depreciate advanced payments (Gourville and Soman 1998). Therefore, they are less likely to consume a pre-paid service for a longer time span between purchase and consumption. How does an externally imposed separation of payment and consumption of a service affect the likelihood of cancellation? In particular, how does payment depreciation affect the likelihood of service cancellation?

Refunds are widely used in advance selling of services (Ringbom and Shy 2004). Typically, these refunds are only partial since the service provider returns the price less a cancellation fee. Partial refunds may motivate consumers to notify the service provider in case of a cancellation (Xie and Gerstner 2005). But how do partial refunds affect consumers’ likelihood of cancellation? Do consumers combine the payment and refund in one mental account?

Consumers’ decisions on canceling a service may also depend on price. A higher price implies higher sunk costs and may therefore lower the likelihood of cancellation. But how does the price affect the likelihood of cancellation if the service provider offers refunds?

Consumers may differ with respect to their consumption enthusiasm. Enthusiastic consumers have a lively interest in a service (Bloch 1986a, 1986b). Prior research suggests that consumers can derive a positive utility from waiting for pleasant services (Frederick, Loewenstein and O’Donoghue 2002). Therefore, a delay between purchase and consumption can increase consumption enjoyment for pleasant services (Nowlis, Mandel and McCabe 2005). Does the likelihood of service cancellation for enthusiastic consumers decrease based on increasing consumption enjoyment the longer consumers have to wait for the service?

In the two experimental studies, we explored the influence of payment depreciation, refunds, price and consumption enthusiasm on service cancellations. In study 1, we tested whether payment depreciation and partial refunds as well as price influence service cancellation. We conducted a 2 (refund vs. no refund) x 2 (low vs. high price) x 2 (time: two days vs. six months) between-subjects design. The results of this study show an interaction effect between timing of payment and refund. For refundable services, the likelihood of service cancellation increased over time. Consumers are more likely to cancel the service the longer in advance the payment is made. For nonrefundable services, the likelihood of service cancellation shows no difference on the timing of payment. In addition, the price of the service has a significant influence on the likelihood of service cancellation. Consumers are more likely to cancel a low-price service compared to a high-price service. In addition, partial refunds affect the likelihood of cancellation stronger for high-price services than for low-price services.

In study 2, we analyzed the role of consumption enthusiasm as moderating variable in the likelihood of service cancellation. We conducted a 2 (refund vs. no refund) x 2 (time: two days vs. six months) between-subjects design. The consumption enthusiasm of the participants was measured using a response scale. The results concerning payment depreciation and refunds are consistent with study 1. We found that unenthusiastic consumers are more willing to cancel services the longer in advance the payments are made. Enthusiastic consumers, in contrast, are more likely to consume services the longer in advance the payments are made. This result is driven by a positive utility from waiting for the service performance. The likelihood of service cancellation is primarily affected by anticipated enjoyment and not by payment depreciation. However, for refundable services we found the opposite. Enthusiastic consumers are more likely to cancel services. The refund seems to be attractive and results in a higher cancellation rate.

Our results have some managerial implications. For example, managers might consider decreasing refunds over time because of the payment depreciation. Moreover, managers might dispose refunds for low-price services. Since refunds for low-price services are small dollar amounts the consumers’ hassle of obtaining the refund may easily outweigh its value.

References


Don’t Call Us, We Will Call You: The Detrimental Effects of Prospective Memory Requirements on Service Response Time Evaluations and Behavior
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Some university departments require students to log on to a departmental web page to see their grades while others send students their grades via email or SMS. Similarly, there are health clinics that ask patients to call the clinic to inquire about test results while others promise to get in touch with patients when test results are available. In this research we compare service response time evaluations for users that must self inquire about service status with evaluations of users that receive automatic notification of it. Diverging from past research concerned with judgments and evaluations of relatively brief service duration components (e.g., waiting in line, the upload time of a webpage) we focus on the much longer durations associated with a service response that can take days or even weeks.

We offer that under certain circumstances self inquiry system users pay special attention to time because the passage of time serves as a trigger for them to remember when to inquire about service status. In other words, a self inquiry system imposes a prospective memory requirement that increases temporal relevance (Block and Zakay 2006). Consequently, response time evaluations of users of a self inquiry system is expected to be more negative than of users of response systems for which temporal relevance, and therefore attention to time, is low. The predicted negative effect of attention on response time evaluations follows from research concerning duration judgments of relatively short events by Zakay and Block (2004). They find that an event’s duration is judged as longer in a prospective judgment task in which participants know in advance that they will be required to estimate event duration, and therefore they monitor time closely, than in a retrospective judgment task, in which participants are not told in advance that they will be asked to estimate event duration, and therefore do not focus on time. Zakay and Block (2004) propose that attention to time underlies judgments in the prospective task (experienced duration) while memory processes underlies judgment in the retrospective task (remembered duration).

As mentioned above we contend that the passage of time serves as a trigger for self inquiry system users to inquire about service status. Importantly, we also offer that attention to time should vary as a function of user expectations concerning when a response will be provided. Specifically, attention to time should increase as the expected response time approaches and should remain high until service response provision, since this is when users must monitor service status. Importantly, the attention that users of an automatic system allocate to time is not expected to increase at the same pace since they do not have to actively monitor service response status.

The prediction of an interactive effect of Report mode (self inquiry vs. automatic) and Expectancy congruency (faster vs. slower than expected) were tested in a web based study, employing a 2 X 2 between subject factorial design. Participants were recruited via the web for an experiment that purportedly examined the effects of web interface on psychometric test performance. As compensation for their participation they were entered into a lottery that offered substantial vacation prizes. Upon signing up for the experiment, each participant was randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions. After completing the psychometric test participants were given instructions according to their condition that specified how they would receive the test scores and lottery results and when they should expect these results. Participants in the self inquiry condition were told that they would have to log on to the study website to find out whether the results were already available while those in the automatic condition were told that they would receive an email notifying them when the results were available on the web site. Participants in the faster than expected group were told to expect the results within 6 days while those in the slower than expected groups were told to expect the results within 2 days. The results were made available to all after 4 days. Before participants viewed their test score and lottery outcome they were asked to respond to questions regarding the computer interface (consistent with the purported purpose of the experiment), response time evaluation, their preoccupation with the test and lottery results, and demographics. We also recorded each participant’s web site entries throughout the interval between test and result provision.

Lastly, an indirect behavioral measure was used to test for long term detrimental effects of using a self inquiry system. This was done by testing participants’ post-experimental readiness to exert effort in response to a request from the experimenters. A week after announcing the test results participants were sent an email asking them to participate in a second experiment. In this email participants were given the web address of the new experiment and they were told that there would be no compensation for participation. Subjects signed up for the experiment by accessing a new website and providing the email with which they had registered to the first experiment. The second experiment consisted of a series of sequentially presented numerical anagrams for which participants had to decide whether or not there was a solution. Participants were not told the total number of anagrams that were to be solved in the experiment. They could terminate the experiment each time a new anagram appeared by clicking an exit button. There were a total of 20 anagrams. We measured the time participants were engaged in the task, the number of anagrams that they solved, and their accuracy.

Consistent with predictions, the detrimental effects of using a self inquiry response system relative to an automatic system on user evaluations and satisfaction were more pronounced when the response was provided slower than expected than when it was provided faster than expected. This pattern was reflected in response time evaluation, satisfaction with the service and effort exerted in the anagram task. Finally, preoccupation with wait time mediates the detrimental effect on response time evaluation.
ROUNDTABLE

Interrogating Fashion: Fashion Cultures and Fashion Discourses
Annamma Joy, University of British Columbia, Canada and The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

The prime purpose of this session is to interrogate all aspects of fashion—it’s past, it’s present and it’s future. Some key themes that we will pursue through this discussion are: (1) Fashion necessitates a critical examination of “the cultural construction of embodied identity.” (2) Fashion draws us into the cultural practice of reading surfaces (3) Fashion is a global phenomenon but not necessarily a western phenomenon. (4) Fashion is riddled with tensions relating to its relationship with gender and class. Finally, (5) innovations and changes in fashion are being spearheaded by new digital technologies—always creating the next cool thing.

This round table session is the first of a series of attempts that we plan on the topic “Fashion cultures and Fashion discourses.” The prime purpose is to interrogate all aspects of fashion—it’s past, it’s present and it’s future. We hope to pursue this at the North American ACR in 2007, and also follow it up with a publication on the topic in a special issue of Consumption, Markets & Culture. At the outset we want to specify that for a topic this broad, we include a caveat—that materialism and society are indelibly entwined. A multi-disciplinary and cross-cultural approach allows us to tie together the different strands that form the world of fashion.

Let me outline some key themes that we will pursue through this discussion. These are by no means exhaustive but provide some contours for the discussions to take place: (1) Fashion, dress and adornment was described by Mauss (1992) as techniques of the body that have an impact not only on our appearance but also on our experience of the body. The editors of Fashion Theory define fashion as “the cultural construction of embodied identity.” Judging by the number of books on fashion it seems that “the fashioned body” has received a lot of attention. But, fashioning the body and thinking of fashion with the body has not yet received the consideration it deserves. (2) Fashion is an underestimated social force. Brands (e.g., luxury and/or Cool brands) provide a sense of place and a way of anchoring the fluid identity of individuals. In Goffman style it provides a performance script for the transaction of everyday life and focuses on materials and images as a way of negotiating the boundaries between persons and the environment (3) Fashion draws us into the cultural practice of reading the surface yet does not resolve the ambiguity of what a particular look means. Appearances and identity do not neatly map onto each other. Dress and decoration do not always “speak” or even need to be read. (4) Fashion is a global phenomenon but not necessarily a western phenomenon. However, the historical development of the fashion industry in the West made it necessary for downplaying country of origin- (e.g. East Asia) where most of the manufacturing occurs -in the race towards making profits, None the less, fashion is part and parcel of global capitalism and the divide between global and the local in a rapidly changing industry such as this is not clear cut. (5) Fashion is riddled with tensions relating to its relationship with gender and class. While fashioning the female body may occur as the outcome of the “male gaze” (although men are now subject to the dominant gaze as well) creating and managing one’s style and looks are often playful, aesthetic and empowering (6) Fashion requires perpetual change and metamorphosis—it is predicated on producing ever new tastes, artifacts, practices. In this industry, to be entirely new is old (7) The trend towards a multi-cultural fashion regime has somewhat mitigated the dominance of the West in defining fashion since international, ethnic, sub-cultural, and street fashion have all paraded down on Europe’s runway. But are these looks and images stereotyped versions of the “other”? (8) Anti-fashion offers an intentional alternative to the dominance of current fashion. Seen as “dress from the rest of the world”, it implies an undifferentiated “other.” It is also complicated by self-orientalizing strategies used by designers from other parts of the world. (9) Art in it’s various forms has been a source of inspiration for the fashion world. Yet, the divide between commerce and aesthetics is a significant one making the negotiation between the boundaries rather complex. Finally, (9) innovations and changes in fashion are being spearheaded by new digital technologies—always creating the next cool thing. The connections between materiality and sociality have hardly been explored and the social conditions that drive new innovations is ripe for examination.
Merchandise Display affects Store Image
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Priscilla Y. L. Chan, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong

ABSTRACT
This research provides an understanding of how retail merchandise display affects store image according to the perception of consumers, as well as investigating consumers’ preferences for and patronage behaviour towards different merchandise displays in the store.

1. INTRODUCTION
Schmitt (1999) noted that the retail store environment is an extremely outstanding means of providing experience to customers while it is also the most important cause of strong feelings and the given memorable experiences actually endeavor to gain the attention and awareness of the customers. If the store can induce a feeling of pleasure in consumers they would like to stay longer and spend more than if the store has a poor environment.

Kotler (1974), Baker (1986) and Turley and Milliman (2000) found different store environments and atmospheres will deliver different psychological feelings to a customer. These feelings in turn affect their enjoyment of shopping, the amount of time spent browsing, their intention to purchase and the personal values they attain throughout the shopping experience. Donovan and Rossiter (1982) suggested that emotional responses induced by in-store environments are the major determinants of the amount of money the customers spend. Although cognitive factors affect consumers’ store selection and planned purchase within stores to a certain degree, the store environment is also a very important and primary factor to determine their purchasing decisions since it affects their shopping experience directly. If a consumer is satisfied with the store, his intention to visit it again will increase and he may be more loyal to the store. Conversely, if a consumer feels uncomfortable with the store environment, he may not go to the store again. These previous findings clearly illustrate to retailers that every part of the store environment is a very important tool to communicate and to keep up with their consumers. Consumers want to be “entertained, stimulated, emotionally affected, and creatively challenged” (Elliot, 1998). The first image a retailer brand presents to consumers is the store image. Appropriate store image can enhance brand image.

Although merchandise display hasn’t been a focus of study in previous researches, it can be hypothesized that a suitable merchandise display creates a clear store image to customers which helps position the store in the market and also helps gain the attention of customers over their competitors and defining the brand image and positioning in the minds of the consumers. There will definitely be a comparative advantage when consumers can recognize your product more easily. This will make them go straight to your company when the thought to purchase something comes into their minds. This is the reason why a proper and suitable merchandise display is essential. Therefore, the use of a unique store environment can offer a chance to fashion retailers to improve their companies’ sales and profits and to enhance brand image.

The main objective in this research project was to study the impact of different arrangements of merchandise display on store image and their relative effects on the patronage behaviour of consumers with regard to their personal values. This will affect the brand image of the consumers. To be more specific, we wanted to find out what merchandise display descriptors consumers used to differentiate different store images, and how these descriptors help consumers achieve desired personal values. Besides that, consumers’ preferences for the relative merchandise display descriptors can also be examined. In this project, means-end theory (Gutman, 1982) was used in order to link the merchandise display attributes—the means—to the abstract personal values—the ends—through the examining the consequences that consumers perceived from the attributes.

1.1 The Concepts of Merchandise Display
Levy and Weitz’s (1996) mentioned layout, fixture, merchandise, presentation techniques, and colour in their literature, and in this project, these were abstracted for the concept of merchandise display. Indeed, there has been little attention paid to these defined areas and thus few previous empirical research studies on these areas have been done. As Kerfoot et al. (2003) stated, there is a lack of literature that examines the influence of such factors on consumers and the influence of such cues on brand and store communications. In addition, it is true that researchers have always focused on the impact of one element of visual merchandising but their work has not directly investigated the total effects of merchandise display on retail fashion brands or retail store image. Therefore, this study is considered to be important in linking together merchandise display, store image and brand image with means-end chains.

1.2 Retail Store Image
Pierre Martineau (1958) described store image as, “…the way in which the store is defined in the shopper’s mind, partly by its functional qualities and partly by an aura of psychological attributes.” Martineau further defined store image as both “functional” and “psychological”. “Functional” refers to the physical store functions such as merchandise assortment, price range, store layout or any other possible qualities. “Psychological” refers to intangible feelings that a store delivers to its consumers, such as sense of belonging, feeling of excitement or feeling of warmth and friendliness. Aron (1960) defined store image in his study of how television viewing influences perceived store image and shopping frequency. He stated that image is “…a complex of meanings and relationships serving to characterize the store for people”. Kunkel and Berry (1968) mentioned that image, “may be defined as discriminative stimuli for an action’s expected reinforcement. Specifically, retail store image is the total conceptualized or expected reinforcement that a person associates with shopping at a particular store” and “…an image is acquired through experience and is thus learned”. They all stressed that store image is complex by nature and consists of a combination of tangible or functional factors and intangible or psychological factors that a consumer perceives to exist.

However, the way in which a brand is perceived is very much based on individual feelings, expectations, preferences, and experience. This means that different groups of customers place different importance on various store image dimensions. Thus, a retailer must choose to emphasize one or several store image dimensions at the store, and this emphasis should be based on the importance and preferred dimensions that are desired by its target customers. In this project, the dimension of merchandise display has been selected for an investigation of its importance on store image, which will affect the brand image.
1.3 Means-End Theory

A means-end theory is a model that seeks to explain how product or service attributes facilitate consumers’ achievement of desired end-states of being such as happiness, security or enjoyment (Gutman, 1982). It simply specifies the rationale underlying why and what consequences are important, and how different attributes link to personal values. Based on Gutman’s (1982) definition, there are three levels of abstraction in a means-end chain. They are:

1. attributes—the means
2. consequences
3. psychological personal values—the ends

This set of linkage is called a means-end chain because consumers consider the retail store and its attributes as a means to an end. Satisfaction with self-relevant consequences and values result in the desired end. The chain is connections or linkages between attributes, consequences, and values. These linkages or associations have a hierarchical quality in that they connect concepts at a more concrete level of meaning to concepts at a more abstract level. Figure 1 shows a means-end chain model, which was modified from Thompson and Chen’s (1998) model in order to let readers have a more familiar idea of how store attributes connect to personal values.

Attributes can be either concrete (tangible) or abstract (intangible) in nature. In this study, concrete attributes have been defined as any physical merchandise display elements that can be found in a store, and abstract attributes have been defined as the store atmosphere arising from the respective store merchandise display. Consequences are abstract meanings that reflect the perceived merits or demerits when a store has those specific attributes. They may be “psychological” or “social” in nature (Peter and Olson, 1987). Last, personal values, which are the end states of a means-end chain, are “highly abstract meanings” (Peter and Olson, 1987) that a customer gains while browsing through the store, with given consequences.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study was divided into two parts, part I: elicitation and part II: laddering interview. For part I, elicitation, 10 fashion lovers and shoppers aged 18-30 were interviewed individually, each for about 20-30 minutes. For part II, the laddering interview, a sample size of 30 fashion lovers, half of whom were female and half male, were selected and each interview lasted for about 35-40 minutes. The sample population included subjects from different occupations and education levels so as to provide a broad spectrum of responses. Care was taken in order to use appropriate wordings and atmosphere while conducting the interviews.

These groups of respondents were selected because the target respondents within this age group have the most powerful purchasing power and are the main patrons of Hong Kong’s fashion retail stores. Moreover, based on the report by the Census and Statistics Department, this group or segment accounts for one third of the total population in Hong Kong. Therefore, they are a large market in the fashion retail industry.

2.1 Elicitation

The first step in conducting a means-end approach research is to elicit choices from respondents in terms of different brands. The main objective of elicitation is to dig deeper into consumers’ decision-making process, and it is very important to identify the choices or alternatives that each consumer considers before making any decisions. For this project, these alternatives elicited have been used as merchandise display descriptors for the laddering process. Table 1 shows the fashion retail chain stores used as stimuli for the laddering process. The first step in conducting a means-end approach research is to elicit choices from respondents in terms of different brands. The main objective of elicitation is to dig deeper into consumers’ decision-making process, and it is very important to identify the choices or alternatives that each consumer considers before making any decisions. For this project, these alternatives elicited have been used as merchandise display descriptors for the laddering process. Table 1 shows the fashion retail chain stores used as stimuli for the laddering process. The first step in conducting a means-end approach research is to elicit choices from respondents in terms of different brands. The main objective of elicitation is to dig deeper into consumers’ decision-making process, and it is very important to identify the choices or alternatives that each consumer considers before making any decisions. For this project, these alternatives elicited have been used as merchandise display descriptors for the laddering process. Table 1 shows the fashion retail chain stores used as stimuli for the laddering process.
ended questions can enable the researcher to gain insight about the proportion of each consumer’s purchase devoted to every brand by asking: “Over the past year, what percentage of your purchases would you say go to each brand?” Having got the answers, the researcher elicited the respondents’ choice criteria further by making comparisons: “When choosing between brand A and brand B, what kinds of factors, in terms of merchandise display, do you consider?” After all the meaningful answers had been collected, they were content analyzed into a comprehensive list of the elicited distinctions and merchandise display attributes with any duplicate constructs eliminated. These attributes were made bi-polar for the laddering interviews (Table 2).

2.2 Laddering Interview
Laddering is an in-depth, one-on-one interviewing technique used to help understand the ways consumers link the merchandise display attributes to the perceived store image and also help link the attributes to self-personal values as indicated by the Means-End Theory (Gutman, 1982). It also implies using the presence of lower-level answers to present the higher-level answers, so that linkages of attributes, consequences and values shall be discovered. The rationale behind this was to make respondents think critically about how the merchandise display attributes aroused his/her personal motivations.

To do the laddering interview, the 30 respondents were presented with the list of store image attributes in Table 2 and they were asked to rank the ten attributes according to which they thought were the most important choice criteria. Afterwards, the respondents were asked to identify one distinction that they preferred the most, which was intended to be used as the basis for asking interviewing questions in the laddering process. Primarily a line of “Why is that important to you?”, “Why is that?” and “Why do you think so?” questions were asked continuously until respondents could no longer answer any “why” questions. These questions served to discover chains of attributes, consequences and values.

To make the data extracted from the laddering interviewing process reliable and accurate, it followed the suggestions made by Thompson and Chen (1998), “Care was taken to create a suitable interviewing environment in which respondents were sufficiently relaxed to be introspective, and to relate their underlying motivations to the interviewer”. Before starting the interview with the respondents, each of them was ascertainted that “there are no right or wrong answers and the purpose of the exercise was to understand the way they saw different kinds of attributes.” (Thompson and Chen, 1998)

3. DATA ANALYSIS
Each respondent’s answers during the laddering process were content analyzed into the categories of attributes, consequences and values. Initially 84 summary codes (Table 3) were classified so as to include every ladder mentioned by the respondents. These codes were further aggregated into 25 master codes containing 9 attributes, 12 consequences and 4 values in order to show meaningful linkages.

After having all the attributes, consequences and values for the hierarchy value map (hereafter referred as HVM), the next step was to construct an implication matrix. The purpose of an implication matrix was to show the number of times each element leads to another and it was used to show what should be included in the HVM. Both direct and indirect relations were counted in the implication matrix. For example, the ladder A to C, C to V belongs to direct relations and A to V belongs to indirect relations. By examining the matrix, “chains” were then formed to construct a HVM.

In order to construct a HVM, the researcher had to map from the chains extracted from the matrix of implicational relations. A cut-off level of three relations was established in terms of direct or indirect linkages. This means that chains less than 3 relations were not counted. The finalised HVM covered 97 percent of both direct and indirect relations. The construction of HVM followed the recommendations given by Klenosky et al. (1993); attributes, consequences and values were shown in circles with colour white, grey and dark respectively. The width of the connecting lines was used to show the strength of connection between each element and the strength of connection meant the number of respondents linking one element to another, so the thicker the lines, the greater the number of connections. Figure 2 shows the HVM of this project.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Attributes
The nine attributes being used in the HVM are very concrete in nature, and were all extracted from the merchandise display element table, such as “stylish clothing”, “spacious layout”, “attractive poster” and “clean & neat” etc. These elements were used to describe the physical merchandise display attributes that directly affected consumers’ perception to the fashion store.

4.2 Consequences
One distinction of the means-end chain was to see how product/service attributes affect fashion consumers’ choice criteria, and to relate the relative criteria to consumers’ personal relevance, which was named as consequences and values. In this study, fourteen consequences were found, “increase interests and desire”, “high class feeling”, “greater chance of purchase”, “better quality clothing store image”, “attractive”, “comfortable and relax”, “welcome feeling”, “excited and enjoyment”, and “loyalty” were feelings aroused during shopping at the stores; “young and

| TABLE 1 |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Fashion retail stores used for the elicitation |
| 1. Agnes b. | 8. I.T |
| 2. Bauhaus | 9. Lane Crawford |
| 4. D-mop | 11. Two Percent |
| 7. Gucci | |
TABLE 2
Different merchandise displays attributes descriptors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High-class atmosphere</th>
<th>Low-class atmosphere</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spacious layout</td>
<td>Crowded layout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractive mannequins’ appearance</td>
<td>Unattractive mannequins’ appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-organised merchandise</td>
<td>Unorganised merchandise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean, neat merchandise display</td>
<td>Dirty merchandise display</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display fewer garments</td>
<td>Display many garments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colourful display</td>
<td>Dull display</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good dressing of mannequins</td>
<td>Bad dressing of mannequins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not congested/busy environment</td>
<td>Congested/Busy environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large price tag</td>
<td>Small price tag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy recognition of merchandise</td>
<td>Difficult recognition of merchandise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appealing layout</td>
<td>Unappealing layout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showing stylish/trendy clothing</td>
<td>Showing old fashioned clothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glass fixtures</td>
<td>Non glass fixtures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wooden fixtures</td>
<td>Non Wooden fixtures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mannequin beside merchandise</td>
<td>Nothing beside merchanides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye-catching posters beside the merchandise</td>
<td>No eye-catching posters beside merchandise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanged clothing</td>
<td>Folded clothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothes on rack</td>
<td>Clothes not on rack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothes on four way or gondola</td>
<td>Clothes not on four way or gondola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharp contrast colour layout</td>
<td>Monochrome colour layout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft lighting on merchandise</td>
<td>Too sharp/ too little lighting on merchanides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchandise display with theme</td>
<td>Merchandise display with no theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product with “Best Seller” tag</td>
<td>Product without “Best Seller” tag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display with “On Sale” tag</td>
<td>Display without “On Sale” tag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display with details description</td>
<td>Display without details description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display with mix and match</td>
<td>Display without mix and match</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display with many props/ fixtures</td>
<td>Display without many props/ fixtures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display with attractive advertisement</td>
<td>Display with unattractive advertisement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display with accessories</td>
<td>Display without accessories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of banners in shop</td>
<td>Not using banners in shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garment tagged with security code</td>
<td>Garment not tagged with security code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractive packaging</td>
<td>Unattractive packaging</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

fashionable”, and “good personal image for socializing” were more related to consumers’ self image after purchasing the products; others, such as “convenient”, “save time”, “save money”, “stay and buy more than expected”, “facilitate shopping”, and “facilitate mix and match” were mainly concerned with functional advantages. Within the data, “attractive store”, “greater chance of purchase” and “good personal image for socialize” were the dominating consequences. It is found that these findings advocates Thompson and Chen’s (1998) research on fashion retail store image that most consequences were psychosocial.

4.3 Values

Four values were finally be used in the HVM, with the largest proportion devoted to “happiness and enjoyment”, and the second largest to “good personal image”. These were followed by “sense of belonging” and “satisfaction”. These findings are also similar to those of previous researchers including Klenosky et al. (1993), Reynolds and Gutman (1982) and especially Thompson and Chen (1998), that hedonistic values such as happiness and enjoyment were the most important values to fashion shoppers.

4.4 The Hierarchy Value Map

After constructing the HVM, the relative responses of respondents aroused by the 15 display attributes, how these attributes directly affected the customers’ perceptions of the store image, and finally, the ultimate feelings and values that consumers attained through the 15 merchandise display elements were shown. For example, Respondent 1 thought that a Stylish Clothing display (attribute) could result in a Young and Fashionable feeling for the store (consequence), so that she could project herself a Positive Personal Image in her Social Life (consequence), and finally, she felt Happy (value) from shopping at these shops. Therefore, the HVM in Figure 2 shows all of the chain elements that were aroused by the 15 merchandise display attributes to store image, for the 30 interviewees.

However, it is very useful to note some distinctive and dominant chains, which include display with on sale tag—attractive store—stay and buy more than expected—greater chance of purchase—happiness and enjoyment or sense of belonging. This shows (Figure 3) how consumers achieve the hedonistic end-states by the relative attributes. It also means that shoppers perceived shops that “display with on sale tag” as “attractive stores”, and that made them “stay and buy more than they expected”, as a result, there would be a “higher purchasing intention” in the shop and finally, the shopper would feel either “happiness and enjoyment” or a “sense of belonging” to that shop.

From the 33 merchandise display elements (attributes) elicited from the elicitation process by the 10 subjects, we shall see that
these display attributes were in line with the definition of Levy and Weitz (1996), in which they stated that merchandise display should include five elements-layout, fixture, merchandise, presentation technique, and colour. In this study, the merchandise display attributes elicited all fell into these 5 categories, such as “spacious layout”, “colourful display”, “wooden fixtures”, “stylish and trendy clothing” plus “display on mannequins” etc., and those attributes all justified the definitions of Levy and Weitz.

5. CONCLUSION

As mentioned before, fashion retailers nowadays should use every store environment factor as efficiently as possible since it is one of the most important means of providing an enjoyable shopping experience to customers and is a significant cause of strong feelings. This study has shown that if the shoppers feel satisfied and pleasant in the store, through different merchandise display methods, their enjoyment, shopping time and intention of purchasing will be increased. Therefore, it is essential for retailers to spend time and money on a store’s merchandise display in order to increase the consumers’ pleasure directly and indirectly to arouse their intention to buy.

To conclude, the findings from the means-end structures comply with the suggestion made by Grewal et al. (1998) that “a favourable store image positively influences a customer’s purchase intentions” because this study proved that respondents were more likely to buy something at a fashion store with a more positive and preferred perceived store image, especially an “attractive” store.

Further research is needed to address the perceived store images of specific target groups in the sample at different levels, i.e. high-end, medium-end and low-end levels of fashion retail and go further in investigating the relationship of different visual elements in affecting brand image and positioning. Since there has been a lack of empirical research on the effect of merchandise display on store image, it is hoped that, after presenting all the information in this study, some valuable guidelines for different kinds of merchandise displays for fashion retailers can be raised, so that retailers can use these guidelines to improve the store environment and in turn enhance the brand image.

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Anti-Clockwise or Clockwise? The Impact of Store Layout on the Process of Orientation in a Discount Store
Andrea Groeppel-Klein, Saarland University, Germany
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

More and more consumers are not making their buying decisions until they are at the point-of-sale (POS). There, they are inspired by the store design and presentation of products on the shelves. One of the key factors influencing buying behaviour at the POS is consumer orientation, since they can only buy those items they are able to find. In this article we examine the process of customer orientation in retail stores and focus on the impact of the store layout (anti-clockwise or clockwise) on their ability to find products and orientate themselves at the POS. Several empirical studies of store environments (Groeppel-Klein 2001; Groeppel-Klein and Gemelmann 2003; Grossbart and Rammohan 1981; Sommer and Aitkens 1982) show evidence of a significant correlation between the existence of maps of shops (knowledge of product location, assortments, service points, escalators, etc.) and sentiments regarding the convenience of shopping.

The theoretical background to orientation can be found in the studies of environmental psychology and neurophysiology. The cognitive approach of environmental psychology tries to determine how individuals perceive and remember environments. The basis for this ability is cognitive (or mental) maps stored in consumers’ memories. How exactly left and right hemispheres interact in solving spatial task has not yet been fully resolved (Kukolja, Marshall, and Fink 2006) but neurological research suggests the value of further analysing the relevance of cognitive maps. In the current study we investigate some of the ways practitioners believe mental maps can be improved and the ease of orientation enhanced in retail environments.

Research into consumer behaviour has paid little attention to the past to product location in consumers’ mental maps as a success factor in retailing. One notable exception is a study by Sommer and Aitkens (1982) in which participants had to locate eleven different products on a store map (as a measure of how detailed shoppers’ mental maps were). To extend the results of Sommer and Aitkens’ study, we used a geographical information system (which analyses the location of products as indicated on a store map by test participants using a computer program) and integrated moderating variables (guidance direction, right- or left-handedness of the shoppers) and tested the relationship between the accuracy of the mental maps and perceived ease of orientation.

Most shops guide customers through the store in an anti-clockwise direction. This is generally justified by the fact that costumers are for the most part right-handed (Underhill 2000, 76). However, neurophysiological research suggests a different explanation for this turning preference—the hormone dopamine, which is responsible for locomotion in space. The higher the dopamine concentration on the left side of the brain, the more consumers’ attention (and consequently their locomotion) is focused on the right side (Mead and Hampson, 1996; Mohr et al. 2004). In a clockwise-oriented shop, customers will therefore frequently glance at the shop’s interior. It has further been suggested that shoppers also have a general orientation towards the walls because of security reasons of the shops as this makes them feel secure (Appleton 1986); this leads them to notice products on the left-hand side of aisles. Taken together, these two tendencies enable customers to remember more products in a shop with a clockwise layout, which in turn gives them a more positive attitude toward the shop. By contrast, in a store with an anti-clockwise layout, both tendencies concentrate on the right-hand side. This leads us to our first hypothesis (H1): If shoppers are guided in a clockwise direction, they will have a more detailed mental map, evaluate the shop more positively, and be willing to spend more money than if they are guided in an anti-clockwise direction. The first part of our second hypothesis (H2a) re-investigates the central result of Sommer and Aitkens (1982): Irrespective of the guiding direction (clockwise or anticlockwise), customers will recall products located in peripheral aisles better than those in central aisles. The second part of the second hypothesis (H2b) tests, as discussed above, whether a more detailed mental map leads to a more positive evaluation of the ease of orientation and value for money.

We conducted our empirical studies in two shops belonging to a discount grocery chain. Both stores were identical in terms of assortment and prices. However, in one customers were guided clockwise around the store and in the other anti-clockwise. Before entering the shop, subjects in the first study (n=196) had to locate eight specific products on central and peripheral aisles on a store map. The results provide support for H1: subjects in the store with the clockwise layout had a more detailed mental map and evaluated the store better in terms of perceived ease of orientation and value for money. Additionally, they spent more money in the store. In both stores, products on the peripheral aisles were located with a significantly higher level of accuracy than products on the central aisles (supporting H2a). As we had assumed, there was a significant correlation between having a detailed mental map and the ease of orientation/perceived value for money (supporting H2b).

To validate our findings about the relevance of turning bias and the accuracy of mental maps we conducted a second study with a given shopping task. In this study, we looked at shoppers’ travel and search patterns (Titus and Everett 1995; Larson, Bradlow, and Fader 2005). If the clockwise layout is really superior to the anti-clockwise layout then shoppers should take shorter distances to find the products in such a setup. This leads us to our third hypothesis (H3): In a clockwise store layout, significantly more consumers will belong to the group of “efficient shoppers” (in terms of distance and/or time) than in an anti-clockwise layout. In our second study, test participants (n=76, shopping frequency and store patronage were controlled for) were asked to shop eight specific products. Two disguised observers kept track of the walking behaviour of the subjects. As in the first study, we used a GIS to process our data and to test our hypothesis. After a standardisation of the distance covered by test participants we split subjects up into two groups: “short-distance shoppers” and “long-distance shoppers”. The results show that there were significantly more shoppers who covered a short distance for the shopping task in the store with the clockwise layout than in the store with the anti-clockwise layout. A questionnaire completed after the shopping task showed relevant differences in the characterisation of the two groups of shoppers: this related to the accuracy of the mental map, time spent, enquiries made of shop assistants, the perceived ease of the task, and the willingness to spend money.

In summary, the results of our two empirical studies show that embedding spatial information (i.e. knowledge of the location of products) in the shopper’s mind is a key factor for retailing success. The result for both studies reveals that guiding direction and...
product location are responsible for improving mental maps and shopping efficiency.

References


The Influence of Self-Congruity, Brand Personality and Brand Performance on Store Loyalty
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Retail branding has tremendously gained in importance in retail literature (Ailawadi and Keller 2004). However, studies on the antecedents and the consequences of a retail brand are rare.

In consumer research, the interest in understanding and measuring the symbolic meaning consumers attribute to brands has become an important research topic (Austin, Sigauw, and Mattila 2003). Considerable attention has been given to the construct self-congruity, which describes how closely a consumer’s self-concept fits the brand personality. Many studies have examined the effects of self-congruity on consumer behavior (see reviews by Bauer, Mäder, and Wagner 2006). However, self-congruity research in retailing has been limited (Sirgy, Grewal, and Mangleburg 2000). In a related stream of research, a widely accepted brand personality model that posits an influence of self-congruity, brand personality and brand performance on store loyalty. In addition, the applicability of these brand personality dimensions are applicable to retail brands. Investigating the brand personality concept in retailing has been limited among the top research priorities for future retail research (Ailawadi and Keller 2004).

The primary purpose of this article is to develop and test a model that posits an influence of self-congruity, brand personality and brand performance on store loyalty. In addition, the applicability of Aaker’s brand personality scale in retailing is investigated.

It has long been suggested that symbolic attributes of a brand are important for explaining purchasing behavior (Aaker 1997; Austin et al. 2003). Previous research demonstrated that the greater the congruity between a brand’s personality and the individuals’ actual self, the greater the brand loyalty (e.g. Bauer et al. 2006; Sirgy 1982). Some studies also indicate an effect on retail patronage (e.g. Bellenger et al. 1976). Following Sirgy et al. (2000), we propose:

H1: Store loyalty is positively affected by self-congruity.

While an indirect effect of the symbolic attributes of a brand via self-congruity has been studied, a direct effect is rarely examined (Helgeson and Supphellen 2004). Brand personality refers to the human characteristics that can be attributed to a brand. Aaker (1997) has developed a scale to measure brand personality. She proposes 42 traits that are combined into five factors, the brand personality dimensions: competence, sincerity, excitement, sophistication, and ruggedness. While a direct effect on brand loyalty seems likely, no study exists that directly links Aaker’s five dimensions to store loyalty. Prior research, with one exception, included either self-congruity or brand personality in a model. The study by Helgeson and Supphellen (2004) demonstrates, though, that both constructs are distinct constructs and including both constructs as antecedents of store loyalty enhances the predictive power of a model. Thus, we propose:

H2: Store loyalty is positively affected by the dimensions of brand personality.

While the functional attributes of a brand might not play an exclusive role in explaining brand loyalty, it is still commonly acknowledged that they have an influence. Keller (2003, 82) refers to these attributes as “brand performance”. Thus, we propose, following a large number of retail researchers (e.g. Sirgy and Samli 1985):

H3: Store loyalty is positively affected by the evaluation of the retail brand performance.

To test the hypotheses, data was collected via an online survey with seven retailers in Germany as stimuli, representing different retail sectors. The retailers, namely Aldi, Ikea, amazon.de, Douglas, dm-drogerie markt, H&M, Media-Markt, are leading retailers in Germany in their respective sectors.

Graduate and undergraduate students were addressed by e-mail. The participants were asked to complete the questionnaire with respect to a retailer which they could choose from a given list. The final number of usable cases was 515.

After eliminating 4 out of the 42 traits from the original Aaker scale, we demonstrated that the scale is generally applicable for retailers, even though slight deviations from the original factor structure appeared.

This present study integrated three predictors of store loyalty in one model that have not been simultaneously tested before. To test the hypotheses, three models were tested, which included self-congruity only (model 1), self-congruity and the five brand personality dimensions (model 2) and self-congruity, brand personality and brand performance (model 3). All three constructs were shown to influence store loyalty, but it became evident that the effect of self-congruity is getting substantially lower when the other constructs are integrated in the model. In model 3, self-congruity only exerted a weak influence (p<.1), while brand performance was of paramount importance for store loyalty. Certain brand personality dimensions, in particular sincerity, competence, and excitement, were shown to be influential in consumers’ patronage decisions, regardless of the congruity with the consumers’ self-concept.

It is important that retail managers realise that the symbolic image of the store (which was often neglected by retailers in the past) plays an important role in store patronage and loyalty behavior (Sirgy and Samli 1985, 287). Based on our results we can encourage retail marketing managers to provide their retail brands with a clear brand personality. We also demonstrated that the match of the personality of a store to the self-concept of the target customer is relevant for developing store loyalty. However, this effect should not be over-estimated. The predictive power from self-congruity is lower than that of the specific brand personality dimensions and it turned not significant when the other variables were controlled for. More research on the relation between self-congruity and brand personality is needed. However, our study indicates that it might be useful to strengthen the dimensions “competence”, “sincerity”, and “excitement” regardless of the target group of the retailer.

Our results confirm previous studies in the high importance of functional attributes (Sirgy et al. 1991). In the current study, they play a pivotal role in explaining store loyalty. Thus, one important implication of our study is that a balanced approach, where functional attributes and symbolic attributes of the retail brands are taken into consideration, is to be recommended (Garton 1995).
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Towards a Narratology of Brands?
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The meanings of brands are among the most valuable and effective symbolic resources of contemporary consumer culture (Levy 1959, p. 119). Understanding their emergence, evolution, and socio-cultural influences is consequentially a central aim of marketing and consumer culture research (Arnould and Thompson 2005).

Traditionally, marketing researchers have studied brand meanings from either micro and macro perspectives. Micro-level approaches predominantly employ quantitative measures, for instance, of brand personalities (Aaker 1997) and brand images (Gardner and Levy 1955; Keller 1993) that accumulate consumers’ associations with brands. These approaches reliably represent the actual literal connections that consumer make with a brand, but systematically neglect the ideologies, tensions, and cultural resources that influence these associations over time and space (Firat and Venkatesh 1995). Consumer culture theory approaches this gap by using analytical approaches such as deconstruction (Stern 1997), discourse theory (Hirschman et al. 1998), semiotics (Mick et al. 2004), brand genealogy (Holt 2004), narrative relationship analysis (Stern et al. 1998), dramaturgical analysis (Grove and Fisk 1992), or poststructuralist analysis (Giesler 2008; Thompson 2004; Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007). With focus on consumption, media, and advertising texts, they better reveal the social and ideological influences on the evolution of brand meanings.

Yet despite valuable insights, for instance, into the influences of conflict (Kozinets 2001), religiosity (Muniz and Schau 2005), mythology (Thompson 2004), or legitimacy (Kates 2004) on brand meaning, existing approaches are still unsatisfactorily equipped for studying the complex intertemporal brand systems through which brands become effective cultural resources for owners, antagonists, and other interest groups (for an exception see Holt 2004).

On these grounds we offer the idea of “brand narratology.” Drawing on literary theory (Polkinghorne 1988; Ricoeur 1984), brand narratology combines theory and methods for systematically eliciting, examining, and synthesizing the contents, compositions, and contexts of consumer brand narratives. By means of systematic narratological dissection of individual stories, we expect to enable researchers to better elicit how interrelated brand narratives emerge, how they are perceived, experienced, and socially constructed within a particular social environment, and which dramatic forms of narratives are more likely to resonate in the respective realm of influence than others.

The approach bases upon the following premises. First, it accepts the idea that humans cognitively process and communicate their lives as narratives (Bruner 2004). Existing marketing theory supports this belief especially within the dramaturgical framework (Deighton 1992; Escalas 2004; Moisio and Arnould 2005; West et al. 2004). Second, from this view it derives that consumers also organize their brand-related experiences in the forms of narratives. The resulting “consumer brand narratives” are influential threads in people’s life stories that explicitly involve brands. Third, as consumers begin to share their brand-related experiences, they develop “brand systems” as systems of communication that organize consumers’ evaluations of expected experiences and social effects of particular brands in various contexts (Giesler 2003; Luedicke 2005).

A brand narratological analysis, as outlined here, consists of the analysis of consumer brand narratives and the synthesis of a meta brand narrative map. Based on the concepts of Genette (1988) and Stanzel (1984), the narratological analysis of consumer brand stories inquires into three domains: content (the narrative), composition (the narration), and context (the narrator in a social context) (Jahn 2005). The analysis of the content of a consumer brand narrative evokes insights into the experiences, the involved primary and secondary pro- and antagonistic characters, the key environments, props, and plots, and the symbolic devices that are relevant to the narrator. The analysis of the composition of a narrative allows for deriving knowledge on the emotional involvement of the respondent with the brand narrative, the closeness to the story, the author’s self- and other-orientation, and the position of the narrator within the social system that is described. The examination of context allows for interpreting the experiences and events that are expressed in the narrative in the context of the overall ideologies, experiences, and resources of the respondent. If narratives are elicited through interview, the study of context also informs about the relationship of the respondent with the interviewer, which may influence the choice and tonality of the narrative.

In a second step, brand narratology suggests a synthesis of the central narratological elements of the consumer stories into a meta brand narrative map. Such a literary construction of salient themes is sought to organize the key story lines, complementary and oppositional brands, influential actors, typical settings, historical tensions and etc. that brand interest groups perpetuate in their communications about the brand over time. We expect that an empirically grounded mapping of consumer brand narratives on a meso-level of analysis will reflect the effective cultural meanings of a brand more comprehensively than existing micro- and macro-level measures and, thus, allow marketers for more pointedly advancing the system.

In conclusion, we hope that the idea of brand narratology inspires scholars to further research and advance the study of effective cultural brand meanings on a systems level.

References

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Dissolution of a Person-Brand Relationship: An Understanding of Brand-Detachment
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INTRODUCTION

This study aims to establish an understanding of brand detachments in the relationship ending process between a customer and brand. Retaining customers plays a vital role in pursuit of long term business success (Mittal and Lassar, 1998; Reichheld and Teal, 1996). Business analysts have suggested that the cost of recruiting a new customer is five times greater than the cost of retaining an existing one (Reichheld and Sasser, 1990; Barsky, 1994). There is an increased level of interest in studying customer retentions and brand loyalties. Unless we have a good understanding of how consumers move away from a brand, the preventive course of actions cannot be formulated. This study draws theories from marketing, sociology, psychoanalysis and psychology. Theoretical frameworks and models on how to establish and improve relationships with new and existing customers are used to understand the vital elements required in forming a relationship, assuming an absence of which might contribute to the dissolution of a relationship.

RELATIONSHIPS

People have always managed to communicate and establish relationships; it is something deeply rooted in our nature and basic needs that humans share with all other living creatures, and this has helped the race in surviving, in making sense of the world and also in reducing risk, cost, and uncertainty (Rosen, 2000). As stated by Duck (1982, p. 105) “persons in an open field select another person with whom to initiate a relationship because the perceivers have expectations that the target can satisfy needs the perceivers cannot meet alone.”. Hinde (1979) adds to this point that for a relationship to truly exist, interdependence between partners must be evident: thus, the partners must collectively affect, define and redefine the relationship (Fournier, 1998).

Person-Brand Relationships

The interdependence theory predicts that the degree to which an individual is dependent upon a relationship is determined by the ratio of overall costs versus benefits derived from it (Kelley and Thibault, 1978). This statement can be applied to a person-brand relation, where the term value plays an important role (Grönroos, 1997). In the relationship marketing context, value is considered to be an important constituent, and the ability of the company to provide superior value to its customers is regarded as one of the most successful strategies in gaining competitive advantage (Ravald and Grönroos, 1996, p. 19). Similarities exist between interpersonal and consumer-object interactions, so a relationship metaphor can be used to explain the link between a person and an object. The same legitimisation of brand-as-a-partner passes through a process in which the brand itself becomes animated, humanised, or somehow personalised (Fournier, 1998).

Customers often associate personality qualities with brand objects (Aaker, 1997), in thinking about brands as if they were human characters (Levy, 1985), or in assuming the perspective of the brand in order to articulate their own relationship views (Blackston, 1993). Moreover, as Fajer and Schouten (1995) observe, in the exactly same way that people make distinctions among their friends–or, put in different words in reference to Rodin (1978): “although we like all of them, we do not value our friends equally”–human beings also associated with brands, similar to the criteria highlighted by Rosbullt and Van Lange (1996) of how we stay in a relationship, i.e. the satisfaction of certain liking criteria, the perceived substitutability, and the general assessment of costs versus benefits.

In the last two decades, literature contains theories of love (Shimp and Madden, 1988), and trust (Hess, 1995) to explain consumer behaviour. As affective states become more important for understanding the relationship with a brand, and the notion of brand attachment has been used to explain brand loyalty (Aaker, 1991), affective states can also occur as part of the dissolution process. Strandvik and Holmlund (2000, quoted in Michalsky, 2004) have noted that dissolution may happen in terms of attitudinal effects (emotion and cognition) and/or behavioural changes. So far, the understanding of the dissolution of relationships is based on our understanding of how the relationship is formed.

The key elements that determine the degree to which one tends to remain and to feel psychologically attached to a relationship (commitment) are: (1) the level of satisfaction; (2) the quality of alternatives, and (3) the investment size (Rosbult and Van Lange, 1996). There may thus verify a hidden dissolution of the relationship when only attitudinal changes happen without effects on behaviour. In terms of person-brand relationships, (1) and (2) can be projected to be influenced by the perceptions of quality.

Brand Detachment

Emotional detachment is a technique by which the neurotic system resolves internal conflict by maintaining emotional distance towards others (Horney, 1993), and it usually precedes the final dissolution of interpersonal relationship. A detached person tries to eliminate any sort of feelings from his life (or experience) or even to deny the existence of feelings, in a sort of ‘emotional lack’ with the essential aim of refusing commitment. Detachment, therefore, is a consequence of the need to maintain an emotional distance towards the others, because to feel consciously a big love or a violent hatred would be opposite to the approach that such a person undertakes. As demonstrated by Levenson and Gottman (1985) in their study of separation and divorce–in the field of psychology–the detached man feels less positive affect as well as less negative affect towards the woman, and this attitudinal process starts well before the final separation, making the partners lead separate lives both emotionally and in terms of their behaviour (Weiss, 1976). In the sphere of marketing, relationships between people and brands bear a notable resemblance to interpersonal relationships (Fournier, 1998), detachment can be seen as a psychological state preceding the termination of the affiliation with a given brand. It is manifested by the decrease, or even the disappearance (leading to indifference, Cohen 1967) of affective reactions towards the brand, in the same way that being affectively detached from someone variously implies being taken away from her/him, not liking her/him anymore, and not seeking her/his presence or appreciating her/his company.

Brand detachment is defined as “the psychological state of distance with regard to a brand, resulting from the weakening or the dissolution of the affective bond existing between the consumer and the brand” (Pierrin-Martineq, 2004, p. 1007). This psychological state is affective and cognitive, as well as behavioural. Some researchers attempted to describe this emotional and psychological state but when trying to elaborate the role of ‘indifference’ (Cohen, 1967) and ‘rejection’ (Pierrin-Martineq, 2004), the discussion
became confusing and contradictory. For example, brand detachment should be differentiated from other concepts, such as attitude, rejection, and indifference, according to Pierrin-Martineq (2004); yet, to Cohen (1967) detachment is similar to indifference. While attitude can be defined as a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993), and its cognitive component characterises the entire set of beliefs in relation to a brand (Peter, et al., 1999), the cognitive component of brand detachment refers only to its (brand) salience in the consumer’s mind. On the other hand, the affective component of brand detachment is richer than that of an attitude, because it concerns the actual reduction of all affective reactions (affection, interest, attraction) previously felt towards the brand.

### KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING BRAND DETACHMENT

Early studies on the subject of relationship development and dissolution used a marriage as an analogy (Levitt, 1983). “The sale merely consummates the courtship. Then the marriage begins. How good the marriage is depends on how well the relationship is managed by the seller (Levitt, 1983, p. 111).” Studies focused on identifying the factors for the divorce in a marketing relationship as perceived by an organisation (Perrien, et al., 1995), and on the exit process as felt by customers (Stewart, 1998a). The evolution of relationships were summarised into four general phases, namely awareness, exploration, expansion and commitment (Dwyer et al., 1987). Dependence is one of the important binding elements in these phases. In light of the limitations acknowledged by the first addresser of the issue of relationship ending, i.e. the processes of dissolution, more and more researchers have approached the topic (Gronhaug, et al., 1999; Tählinen and Halinen, 2002; Hocutt, 1998), contributing to the significant growth of the field. In contrast, a consumer’s dissolution process is made up of four phases (Fajer and Schouten, 1995): (1) breakdown, (2) decline, (3) disengagement, where and (4) dissolution that sees the termination or permanent dismemberment of the relationship, either through negotiation or unilateral withdrawal. This model raised the question whether or not the initial ‘breakdown’ is triggered by an incident or negative experience. Affective and emotional factors play a major role in the termination of personal relationships, and they are also to be considered of primary concern in a brand-relationship dissolution process (Fournier, 1998). The dissolution of brand-person relationship results from one or more elements which forms the initial relationship or brand attachment are no longer exist in the relationship. The key factors derived from the literature are the perception of quality and the state of emotional involvement with the brand.

### Perception of Quality

As Morgan and Hunt (1994) argue, of central importance in developing relationships is the level of commitment a partner feels towards that affiliation, where the level of commitment determines the strength of a relationship and the intention of the parties to remain involved in it. One of the key constructs characterising commitment, as argued by the relationship dissolution model (Rosbuilt and Ferrell, 1983) is satisfaction, in which it acts as a mediating variable between two other related variables–trust (a precondition for increased commitment [Miettila and Möller, 1990], defined as the willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence [Moorman, et al., 1992]) and social bonds (defined by Wilson [1995, p. 339] as “the degree of mutual personal friendship and liking shared by the buyer and the seller”)–and of which higher degrees lead to higher levels of commitment (Kelley and Davies, 1994). Satisfaction is usually measured by the perceptions of quality versus the prior expectation (Mai, 2005). This reiterates the emphasis on the issue of ‘quality’. However, Stewart (1998b), however, has confuted this position with her qualitative study, which discovered that consumer dissatisfaction in neither a sufficient nor a necessary explanation for ‘customer exit’. Exit is precipitated by the customer’s perception of quality decline, which helps explain why not only dissatisfied customers switch or end their relationships (Jones and Sasser, 1995). Therefore, ‘lowering of quality’ is included as one of the factors to be examined of its impact on brand detachment in this study.

### Emotional Involvement

The dissolution of a commercial relationship between business partners can be a significant source of psychological, emotional and physical stress (Dwyer et al., 1987). Consumer dissolution process is a complex process involving cognitive, emotional, and behavioural elements (Michalsky, 2004). Detachment does not involve a strong negative affective state towards the brand, such as rejection: no longer liking a brand is not the same as hating it, and if brand detachment is shown by the partial or total loss of certain positive affective reactions it does not necessarily entail the appearance of negative affective reactions. In other words, neither indifference nor rejection fully represents detachment. Despite the growth exhibited over the past few years, and the advancements obtained by the studies of researchers such as Hocutt (1998), Michalsky (2004) and Pierrin-Martineq (2004), the field still needs to enrich and to deepen the understanding of brand detachment. In particular, the following study will attempt to discover the determinants of this state by examining ‘indifference’ and ‘rejection’ in relation to brand detachment.

### METHODOLOGY

This study attempts to provide a better understanding on the affective responses. The deterioration in relationship eventually leads to the breakdown of a relationship between consumers and brands. It was decided to focus on three main factors based on the literature. They are ‘perception of quality decline’, ‘indifference’ (reflecting a low level of emotional involvement), and ‘rejection’. It is hypothesized that:

\[ H_1: \text{Perception of quality decline by consumers has a positive influence on brand detachment.} \]
\[ H_2: \text{Indifference has a positive influence on brand detachment.} \]
\[ H_3: \text{Rejection has a positive influence on detachment.} \]

### Interviews and Questionnaire Design

A survey was conducted in order to collect data for the test of hypotheses. Before designing the questionnaire, three in-depth interviews were also used to explore consumers’ detachment experiences from brands. The results contribute to the design and the wording of questions. The starting framework for the qualitative research has been provided by the Switching Paths Analysis Technique (SPAT) devised and developed by Roos (2002). By using SPAT the technique divided between a trigger, an initial state, the process and the outcome stage, and it is based not on a transaction or sequence, but rather on the relationship level, which implies that the whole process of relationship ending perceived by the customer is the object of the analysis. Another framework of reference used by author regards the distinction among six different types of relationship ending provided by Michalsky (2004). In the present
The focus is given only on relationships which totally ended, thus making partial ending's determinants beyond the scope of this investigation. A semi-structured discussion guide was prepared, which served as a checklist of the specific issues and topics to be covered during the discussions. Interviewees were recruited from three different age groups, 15-25, 25-40 and 40+, for the purpose of probing different experiences with different product categories. A method called "communicative validity" (Kvale, 1995) has been used to test the validity of the three stories about relationship ending processes in a dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee directly after the latter finished the story telling. This was achieved by visualising the ending process on a graph, with commitment on the y-axis and time on the x-axis, and then asking the respondent if the visualised ending process corresponded to his/her perception of the situation.

The Survey

The samples were randomly selected from the streets of London. The respondents were screened from a filter question that only allows 'detached' individuals to continue. Respondents were asked to think of a brand from which they were detached, in one of the following product categories: clothing, technology, cars and transports, financial and insurance services, food and beverages, health and personal care, cosmetics and toiletries, and household products. After having identified such a brand, subjects were asked to answer a set of questions concerning their past experience and relationship with, and attitudes towards that brand. In particular, the influence of indifference, rejection and the perception of quality decline was tested on the state of brand detachment. There was a relatively larger number of respondents (24.7%) who chose clothing brands, followed by technology (13.3%) and car brands (13.3%).

Before testing the hypotheses, some general descriptive analyses were undertaken. The preliminary analysis of results covered three aspects of the questionnaire data: gender, age groups' distribution, and the attitudes and perception of consumers after the state of brand detachment had taken place.

Gender and Age

The survey sample is comprised of an equal proportion of males and females (Table 1). Since dissimilar views between genders could generate different experiences with the brand, as well as different attitudes and reactions towards relationship dissolution, the predominance of one sex over the other could bias the results of the entire study. This outcome, instead, is advantageous to our purposes since any risk of bias towards sexes is reduced to a minimum.

The profile of the age indicates a reasonably good representation of all the age groups, with 5.9% of respondents aged less than 15 years old and a slightly higher number of 15-25. It is worth noting that young people more likely to be innovators and brands switches

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<td>17</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Product Category</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cars &amp; Transports</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial &amp; Insurance</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food &amp; Beverage</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Personal Care</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosmetics &amp; Toiletries</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Products</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
than the elder groups. Also, it is observed during the survey young people find it difficult to find a brand in response to the questions. The largest age group (31.8%) is the age group between 15 and 25 years-old, followed by the 46 to 55 years-old (19.6%) and the 36 to 45 years-old (16.1%).

Attitudes Just Before the Relationship Ended

The attitudes towards the brand just before the detachment process were measured by asking respondents to recall how they felt about the brand just before the relationship ended. As the ending of relationship is interpreted as ‘detachment’, the aspects measured also reflect the attitudes before the brand detachment occurs. There is no strong agreement expressed by the respondent towards the statements but ‘Complaining wouldn’t have changed the outcome’ ‘I no longer thought about the brand’, ‘I needed to change because the brand’s quality had lowered’, ‘I did not feel anything towards the brand’ (in other words, indifference) have relatively higher levels of agreements than others. In contrast, respondents expressed disagreement towards statements of ‘I complained to the company about the brand (mean=2.23)’, ‘The company sent me promotional materials regarding the brand (mean=2.74)’, ‘I changed the shopping environment to avoid the brand (mean=2.93). Consumers do not tend to complain before they move away from a brand and believe complaining will not make a difference to the outcome. Amongst other statements (see Table 3), consumers do not seem to spread negative word of mouth as drastic as marketers thought. The mean analysis shows ‘I told many people not to buy the brand’ is on the disagreement side of the scale.

Dissolution of a Brand Relationship and Detachment

Apart from ‘I no longer think about the brand’ and ‘I no longer like the brand’, most of the attitudes measured by the survey have low means that indicate a general disagreement towards the statements used in the questionnaire. With a mean of 4.36 on ‘I no longer think about this brand’, it means most people seem to have been able to detach themselves from the brand similarly they tend to agree with the statement that ‘I no longer like the brand’. In contrast, respondents tend to disagree with other statements. However, there is a wide spread of opinion that is reflected in the high value of standard deviations (see Table 4). Therefore it is worthwhile to further explore the data amongst sub-groups.

The mean analysis in Table 1 indicates that most people still consider that brands are important after the brand detachment process occurred (mean=3.06; neutral point=4). One-way ANOVA is used to further analyse the attitudes amongst consumers in relation to various product categories, the result shows there is a significant difference amongst various product categories (P<0.01). In the Car and Transports product category, consumers value strongly on brand names compared with other categories while consumers place less emphasis on brand name in the Health and Personal Care product category. (See Table 5)

A brand provides familiarity, and people in the majority of cases still prefer a known label tag to an unknown one. From the results obtained, it suggests that the great majority of people would not turn back to their former choice (Table 4, mean=3.25), even if the brand was on promotional sale (mean=3.38). T-test analysis was used to compare if there was a significant difference between consumers who have had problems with the brand before the dissolution of the relationship and those who have not. The result shows there was a significant difference (P<0.01) with a higher proportion of consumers who have never had a problem with the brand willing to reconsider buying the brand (shown in Table 6).

In general, the willingness to reconsider buying the brand is low after the brand detachment. Most people still hold the tendency not to purchase the brand even if there is a promotion.

Dissolution of Brand Relationship

Academics have demonstrated that a customer’s exit is a process characterized by different stages (Fajer and Schouten, 1995, and Roos, 2002). None of them, though, has delineated detachment within these stages, with only one (Pierrin Martineq, 2004) arguing it might appear in the initial phase. Similar to human relationships, they agree that ‘The more the time passed the less I thought about the brand’ and ‘After the incident I felt the association between me and the brand faded away’ that have a mean distinctly indicating agreement (mean=5.23 and 5.02). The other

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2</th>
<th>Cross Tabulation between Product Categories and Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which category does it belong to?</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cars &amp; Transports</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial &amp; Insurance Services</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food &amp; beverages</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health personal Care</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosmetics &amp; Toiletries</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Products</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3</th>
<th>Cross Tabulation between Gender and Age Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age Group</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 to 25 years-old</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 to 35 years-old</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 to 45 years-old</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 to 55 years-old</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 years-old</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The largest age group (31.8%) is the age group between 15 and 25 years-old, followed by the 46 to 55 years-old (19.6%) and the 36 to 45 years-old (16.1%).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 3
Attitudes Right Before the Brand Relationship Ended
N=255

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complaining wouldn't have changed the outcome</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>2.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I no longer thought about the brand</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>1.897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I needed to change because brand's quality had lowered</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>2.084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I needed a change in my life</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>1.871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I did not feel anything towards the brand</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>1.864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t pay attention to any brand initiative or anything regarding the brand</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>1.981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The brand disappointed me</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>2.160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I refused to buy again that brand</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>2.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I forgot about all the positive features of the brand</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>2.122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I still liked the brand</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>1.843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I liked the brand’s advertisements</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>1.844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was getting bored with the brand</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>1.896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt upset towards the brand</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>2.228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I told many people not to buy this brand</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>2.175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I changed shopping environment to avoid encountering the brand again</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>1.962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The company sent me promotional materials regarding the brand</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>2.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I complained to the company about the brand</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>1.862</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*neutral point=4, tendency of disagreement<4, tendency of agreement>4

TABLE 4
Attitudes after Brand Detachment
N=255

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I no longer think about this brand</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>2.073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I no longer like the brand</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>2.077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would purchase again this brand if on promotional sale</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>2.060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am interested to what this brand offers</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For this kind of product, I do not consider the brand important anymore</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>1.996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would reconsider buying this product</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I told many people not to buy this brand</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>2.175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I haven't found any brand as good as this</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>1.634</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
statement also on the agreement side of the scale is ‘I never thought about leaving the brand before the incident (mean=4.78)’ that indicates a proportion of the brand detachments are triggered by an event that is linked to a negative experience (see Table 7). The statement ‘I felt guilty when I started purchasing another brand’ has the lowest mean of 1.89 that indicates consumers do not perceive brand switching is wrong; in other words, there is not much bearing on brand loyalty.

After analysing further the detachment process, 76.1% of the respondents did not think about leaving the brand before the incident occurred. Only 25 people out of 105 admitted to have had an intention to change brand before having experienced an incident with the brand they were using at the time, equally distributed between males and females (12 against 13 responses). Moreover, 67.6% of the same people who agreed for the majority of cases not to have thought about leaving the brand before encountering a
Had Problem with the Brand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have problem with the brand</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>40.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>59.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>93.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Relationships between Selected Variables and Brand Detachment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ind. Variables</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R. Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lowering quality</td>
<td>.156</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>2.032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boredom</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>-.009</td>
<td>2.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>variety seeking</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.009</td>
<td>2.057</td>
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</table>

The Relationships between Lowering Quality and Brand Detachment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependant Variables</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R. Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After an incident, a link with the brand fading away</td>
<td>.131</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>1.829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less bond to the brand as time passes</td>
<td>.213</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>1.803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t feel anything towards the brand</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>-.006</td>
<td>1.844</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

problem, also agreed on the fact that after the incident they felt their links with that brand fading away.

**Relationship Ending**

More respondents who stated to have never had a problem with the brand before stopping using it, than those who stated they had a problem. The result indicates that there is no evidence to suggest that a relationship breakdown is always triggered by an event or a negative experience. Brand Detachment appearing at the initial stage of relationship dissolution is not necessarily triggered by a negative experience. This result contradicts with previous research, e.g. Fajer and Schouten (1995) suggested the first stage of the dissolution is a ‘breakdown’.

**HYPOTHESES TESTING**

**Perception of Quality Decline**

To determine the influence of the perception of quality decline on the detachment from a brand, a regression analysis was carried out in which the perceptions of ‘quality and novelty lowering and variety seeking in case of problems’ were the predictive variables and brand detachment was the dependant variable. The summaries of regression analysis results are shown in Tables 9 and 10. The results suggest that the perception of quality decline does not have a significant influence on brand detachment. The overall $R^2$ value for the perception of quality decline (8.9%) indicates that the perception of quality lowering accounts for only 8.9% of the variance of brand detachment. As a result, H1 is rejected.

The number of cases in which one of the predictors of perception of quality decline by consumers turn out (lowering quality level, boredom and variety seeking), is not sufficient to justify the validity of Hypothesis 1.

**Indifference**

To determine the influence of indifference on the detachment from a brand, a regression analysis was carried out in which indifference was the predictor variable and brand detachment was the dependent variable.

The results shown in Table 11 indicate that hypothesis H2 should be accepted. Indifference has a significant influence on brand detachment. The $R^2$ value for indifference, in both the cases where a problem did and did not arise, (29.9%) indicates that indifference accounts for almost 30% of the variance of brand detachment ($P<0.01$). This outcome shows that indifference represents an active determinant of brand detachment, and an antecedent of the relationship dissolution with the brand. Hence it can be an indicator of the propensity of consumers to leave the relationship, as well as a consequence of it.

**Rejection**

To determine the influence of rejection on the detachment from a brand, a regression analysis was carried out in which
rejection was the predictor variable and brand detachment was the dependent variable.

The results shown in Table 12 indicates that hypothesis H3 is accepted. ‘Rejection’ has a significant influence on brand detachment. The $R^2$ value for indifference, in both the cases where a problem did and did not arise, (28.4%) indicates that rejection accounts for almost 30% of the variance of brand detachment (P<0.01).

**CONCLUSIONS**

The results of this study add to the understanding of the dissolution process between a consumer and a brand. The concept of brand detachment was explained, and incorporated in the academic thread of relationship dissolution—also clarifying its influence on it. Brand detachment represents the psychological state of distance from a brand, resulting from the weakening of the affective bonds existing between the consumer and the brand. It is manifested by a partial or complete loss of affective reactions previously felt by the brand and by casting doubt about the favoured place of the brand in the customer’s mind. This research helped understand the exact moment of entry of brand detachment in consumers’ minds—right after the critical incident has taken place, and in any case during the first stage of the relationship dissolution process—and added two detachment determinants to the present literature. The overall findings suggested that the state of brand detachment increased in relation to indifference and rejection, thereby implying that indifference and rejection can be seen as two indicators of brand detachment, which itself is an indicator of the consumer tendency to end the relationship.

Amongst the three determinants tested in this research, the ‘perception of quality decline’ does not have a significant influence on brand detachment while consumers’ feelings of ‘indifference’ and ‘rejection’ are significant predictors for subsequent brand detachment. The findings reiterated the complexity of dissolution of a brand-person relationship that consumers leaving a brand are not necessarily attributed to an incident or ‘lowering quality perceptions’ as Jones and Sasser (1995) pointed out that satisfied customers defect and some dissatisfied customers stay. Knowledge of the determinants of brand detachment would reduce the probability of its occurrence. If managers do not want to lose their customers, they need to make an effort to keep them when one of these signals appears. Because brand detachment is not as strong as a rejection, or any form of boycott towards a brand, recovery of the customer is still possible, and the brand may come to appeal to the customer again. Companies therefore need to invest in making customers aware of their offers, keep listening to the voice of the market and understand every bit of disinterest and dissatisfaction towards their products or services. This could give them the ability to act on time, and recover a situation which otherwise could bring to more severe adverse consequences.

Despite the importance of these results for understanding the dissolution of certain relationships between brands and consumers, and the findings of the primary research are valid and significant, various limitations should be emphasized. The result of this study with respect to relationship ending suggests relationship ending process is not triggered by a problem or negative event which contradicts with the literature. It may be because consumers are becoming more accustomed to brand switching than when the previous studies were conducted; for example, nowadays, there are many price comparison websites to help consumers compare the prices of goods and services. More research needs to be undertaken to enrich the understanding of brand detachment. In particular, the implementation of studies on determinants is required for deepening knowledge on the factors influencing this state by selecting samples amongst loyalty consumers who change brands as opposed to this study has more than a third of the samples aged 25 or younger. Research restricted to each product category could specify the drivers of brand detachment and help marketers considerably in adapting their tactics for each stage in the relationship process. In future research, hypotheses can be further developed to closely animate human relationships. For example, in breakdown of relationship, the common question we ask is ‘is there someone else?’ and some may cheat. These can be formulated into metaphors that there is a substitutable brand and consumers may try several comparable brands before the person-brand relationship is ended.

**REFERENCES**


SPECIAL SESSION SUMMARY

Popular Music: Between the Margins and the Market

Alan Bradshaw, University of Exeter
Avi Shankar, University of Bath

SESSION SUMMARY

From the seductive beats of Turkish rock, the distortion of the Beatles’ Revolution, the hyper-vulgarity of the Forgotten Rebels and all the way to Dougie Brownlie’s soaring sax jam, this special session explored the complex relationship between music and the mainstream, built upon previous EACR music special sessions (e.g. Schroeder & Giesler’s session in 2005) and re-claimed EACR as the dancing conference (following Brown’s Madonna marketing paper in 2003). The session explored music as the ultimate discursive medium between market and margins, constantly recurrent within studies of the marginal; ranging from the Birmingham School to CCT. Exploring the controversy of Nike’s deployment of the Beatles’ Revolution in an ad, rock festivals in Turkey and the governance of deviance through surf music, all three presentations presented historically grounded analyses of how popular music genres notionally challenge “the man” and other dominant institutions, but is also a contested resource for the serial integration of the margins into the mainstream of commercial culture. Finally, the discussant gloriously and musically raised issues of music as an embodied transformative, visceral social agent that can be considered outside of a consumption-production nexus.

ABSTRACTS

“It’s Only Rock’n’Roll, But We Like It: Appropriation and Contestation of Through Glocal Signs”

E. Taçlı Yazarcoçlu, Unaffiliated
A. Fuat Firat, University of Texas—Pan American

Borrowing, appropriation and internalization are three related and important phenomena in music consumption where it is more difficult to trace the free-floating signs than in literary and visual arts. There are also broader issues of representation through music, such as the representation of different cultures through appropriation, and, conversely, how social and cultural identities and differences are constructed and articulated in music. Given the large global volume of ‘musical’ expenditures, these phenomena are particularly important for consumer researchers who try to interpret cultural transformations through consumption and production of commodities.

Among musical commodities, there is one genre that has differentiated itself as an ideological one by birth: Rock. Representing a significant market among musical commodities and also in consumer activism, the evolution of rock music’s ideological stance and appropriations in different cultures, illuminate different dimensions in cultural consumption and production, especially in a culture like Turkey, situated amidst the East and West, not ever colonized, where we can observe different modes of life. Hence, neither postcolonial studies nor “cultural imperialism” theses are applicable to interpret the evolution and internalization of rock music in this local culture.

Since its inception in 1923 westernization has been the major project of the Turkish Republic, reflected in the policies regarding culture and art. These eventually created new genres which infused each other. Rock, as a western genre, was never banned; it did not emerge as a counterculture, as in the cases of China or Russia; it has not become subservient, as in the cases of Mexico and Quebec in the early 1960’s, and supported by government as in the case of Holland; it was not regarded as primarily a product of the capitalist West, as in the case of Cuba; its hybrid forms in the native language were not a blatant imitation of its Anglo-American counterparts.

In Turkey, rock first appeared in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The first single was launched at the same time as Beatles’ “Love Me Do,” in 1962. Following the tradition of leftist political songs in the 1970s, witnessing high urbanization in the country, Turkish rock culture was highly supported by folk music, the local tunes, and created its own hybrid genre. Interestingly, despite this history, the rock boom started after the 1990s, that is after the economic liberalization and infusion of globalization. The laissez faire market stimulated the multinational music producers who had difficulties with piracy in the 1970s. By 2000, recognizable rock festivals started to emerge. Reminding the legendary Woodstock, rock festivals were long-awaited pilgrimages for rock fans, and vast consumption arenas for both promoters and producers. Today, it is estimated that there are approximately 1000-1500 rock bands in the country. The share of rock music, compared to other pop music genres, commands an impressive 20-25 per cent.

Three years of data were collected, combining several methods, including participant observation at two rock festivals, Rock ’n’ Coke and Rock for Peace (counter festival of the former), rock clubs and rock music contests. Photographic and videographic records, twenty-six in-depth interviews and many conversations with participants at the festivals, intellectuals and academics who study related topics, three e-group/forum discussions, Turkish rock discography complete the whole scope of data collection. The texts so created are analyzed using narrative and textual analyses. These provide insights into the meanings of consumption of music in a context where modes of consumption and experiences of rock music are contested. Data analyses suggest that no consumption choice is devoid of (ideological) contradiction and tension. Given a consumption pattern where consumers are capable of authenticating any “piece” as rock or as its anti-thesis, pop, rock culture still preserves its original values, such as rebellion and feelings of freedom.

In the local culture different forms merge and become one, hybridization occurs through variations of rock music’s ‘genres’, and the hybrid itself becomes an independent experience. It is observed that rock music is fully internalized and becomes a part of the local culture, not only in urban but also, to a smaller extent, in remote parts of the country. No significant differences exist in demographic or political views among rock fans. However, consumption style (i.e., purchasing or illegally downloading), places (i.e., rock bars, TV, radio station) and songs (i.e., language of the lyrics) identify and classify the categories of rock fans. Yet, it is still called “rock”, in English, rock genres are always used with local epithets (e.g., Anadolu rock; Arabesk rock) and are no longer regarded as foreign for those who listen in their native language, while sharing similar concerns and values of global rock fans.

1 The chairs wish to thank and acknowledge the kind assistance of the conference helpers in managing the various different audio problems, Douglas Brownlie’s extraordinary efforts to keep the date and the anonymous reviewer who advised us to play loud music.
Clearly, rock music enables its consumers to produce their own modes of consumption experience and helps us explore future expectations about the contours of cultures.

**Key References**


**“Nike’s Revolution and Intentionality”**

Linda Scott, University of Oxford

Alan Bradshaw, University of Exeter

In 1987 Nike became the only business to successfully license an original Beatles’ recording when they launched their seminal *Revolution* campaign to mark what they saw a revolutionary surge in aerobics. At once the advert resulted in what Phil Knight, Nike CEO recalls as a “ton of criticism” (McCarthy, 2003) from angry letter writing Beatles fans, bemused media commentators as well as attracting litigation from the surviving Beatles. Alongside the controversy, the advert might also be regarded as a classic which helped Nike dramatically increase their sales and reclaim their market leader position from Reebok; “that commercial” according to Nike advertising director Scott Bedbury, “helped turn the company completely around” (cited in Berger, 1990: 37) whilst a writer for *Film Commentator* celebrated the ad as finally realizing the “commercial-as-artform idea” (White, 1987:72). We submit that the *Revolution* ad ought to be regarded as a signal moment in the history of music and advertising. Moreover, by turning to the literary theory concept of intentionality, we seek to ground the debate by reference to how the various commentators understood the intents of the producers.

Whilst fans objected to the voice of the counter-culture being used to sell running shoes, closer attention to the song itself and the socio-historical context from which it emerged, reveals a far more ambiguous, if not ambivalent, meaning. The song was released in 1968 as a message from John Lennon to the burgeoning global counter-culture protest movement which at that time was challenging institutions. As opposed to later radical Lennon songs, the first recording of *Revolution*, released as a flipside to *Hey Jude*, states ‘count me out’. Consequentially, we might think of *Revolution* as not being counter-cultural but rather, as the underground paper *International Times* put it, “about not rocking the boat” or even more damningly, *Ramparts* described the song as a “betrayal” of the radical left. At a time when a revolution seemed to be realizable, anger from the radical movements met Lennon’s message of restraint and conservatism.

Yet the majority of listeners, as evidenced by a BBC poll conducted at the time, seem to have been more concerned with the song signaling a return of the Beatles to pure rock rather than as political commentary. Indeed as a B-Side to *Hey Jude*, it was barely noticed by the mainstream at all; after a lengthy review of *Hey Jude* a reviewer for *Record Mirror* simply wrote about *Revolution*: ‘flipside: pacier, punchy, but on a less spectacular scale’ whilst *Record Retailer*’s was even more concise: ‘flip: faster, more compact’. Therefore outside of the underground media, there is scant evidence that *Revolution* created much of an impact at all. Despite the song’s ambivalent relationship with the counterculture, its eventual appropriation by Nike was seen by many as an abuse of a countercultural icon and the song, despite itself, seems to have been retrospectively re-characterised as an endorsement of revolution. For example, one commentator remembered the song as a soundtrack to anti-Vietnam demonstrations, whilst a rock critic claimed “when *Revolution* came out in 1968, I was getting tear-gassed in the streets of Madison. That song is part of my political life” (cited in Wiener, 1991: 290).

In any case, archival evidence suggests that such analysis was far from the minds of the Nike advertisers in selecting the song. At the time Nike decided that an aerobic revolution was afoot; as Phil Knight described it “we see revolutionary developments happening in the fitness lifestyles of Americans. Walking, crossing training, and children’s fitness are all evolving as important new activities” and, as it just so happened, “there’s a Beatles song called Revolution”. Similarly Janet Champ, who developed the creative brief for Nike, dismissed the controversy by claiming that “part of the reason I really felt fairly good about the concept was that the song said its revolution, this shoe is a revolution... I really felt that was a real solid piece of ground to be on”. Just as Nike creatives had ignored the irony of licensing Randy Newman’s *I Love LA* in their 1984 adverts (close listening to the song reveals that Randy Newman may not-in fact-love LA) the wider meaning of the Beatles’ *Revolution* seems to have been seen as irrelevant to the ad.

In seeking to make sense of this highly contradictory case, we turn to literary theory and in particular the argument that meaning emerges from inferred intentionalities. In the case of Nike’s *Revolution*, it becomes clear that there are multiple layers of inferred contrasting intentionalities between the various players including the Beatles, the 1968 counter-culture and mainstream, Michael Jackson and Yoko Ono (who were both instrumental in allowing the Beatles, the 1968 counter-culture and mainstream, Michael Jackson and Yoko Ono (who were both instrumental in allowing Nike permission to use the song), Nike, the protesting public, Apple Records (who sued Nike), the advertising agencies and others. Putting such inferred intentionalities together through historically grounded research reveals a complex relationship between the mainstream and the counter-culture and a myriad of fascinating intersections between art and commerce, theory and practice and revolution and conservatism which provide an extraordinary lens for understanding the politics of co-optation and the processes of advertising as a cultural text. This study works towards a new model for understanding how advertising functions within complex social dynamics by grounding our understandings with the inferred intentionalities of the producers and the inevitable fallacies that result.

**Key References**


Music plays an important role in the negotiation of deviance and difference in consumer culture. In addition to overt practices of domination to which members of subcultures are often subject, music is part of a more tacit, seductive discourse that operates in both the construction and severance of emotional and economic bonds between surfing communities and other institutions in society.

Between the 1930s and the 1950s, surfers in California articulated a sub-cultural community for which wave riding and beach life assumed a central place. The incipient surf-culture forged a distinct lifestyle that was increasingly considered as a form of deviance. Growing numbers of surfers who displayed antisocial, anti-consumerist, anti-work ethics became a target for educational, military and legal institutions that sought to forcefully supervise their subversive practices through organizational and legal domination. In the first part of this session, considered how music has acted alongside these overt processes of domination as part of a more seductive mode of supervision that takes place through consumer culture (du Gay, 1997).

Specifically, surf-music served corporate and governmental tactics. By appropriation of the styles, practices and sub-cultural capital that surfers had developed, numerous productions reconstructed an image of a cleaned up, temporary distraction from the more serious roles of middle class life. During the early 1960s a host of musicians such as The Beach Boys, The Chantays, Dick Dale, The Challengers, Jan and Dean, The Marketts and The Surfaris, defined a musical genre that supported the fabric of American social life, working practices, and familial roles. Gary Usher and Roger Christian’s title track to the film Beach Party (1963) exemplifies this harmlessness, ‘clean-teen’ image of surf-culture. Performed by the stars of the film, Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello, the lyrics illustrate a vacuous genre that robbed surf-culture of any kind of political subversion or resistance and instead constructed surfing as a productive aspect of consumer culture and a contained form of deviance.

Not only did many youths subscribe to this toned-down version of surf-culture, the subsequent popularization of surfing led to a temporary dilution of the cachet and hard-core lifestyle associated with surfing subcultures. Nevertheless, these appropriative and adulterated cultural modes were not the only track along which representations of surf-culture have developed. At various times, surfers have fought back against ‘clean-teen’ images supplied by film, music and surfing industries. In the second part of this session, we considered examples of this counter-movement. The first of these was music and film associated with soul surfing—a purer, greener interpretation of surf-culture that attempted to broker a divorce from mainstream corporate exploitation and establish a new way of life seated in less urban, countercultural values.

Following this, we observed some contemporary subcultural expressions of violent community, deviant behaviour, and denigration of the mainstream. The music and images associated with these interpretations of surf-culture represented an othering process exercised by surfers on the rest of the surfing population. The aim of this action was to negotiate the alienation felt as a result of those processes of commercialization that robbed meaning and identity from participants in surf-culture. Severance with the mainstream represented an attempt to reconstruct identity and meaning through new kinds of practices designed to obstruct appropriative tactics. Music played a role in this process by mobilizing noise, deviant community, and the disruption of bureaucratic authority (Hill, 2002). Cumulatively, these factors combine to construct surfers as dirt: ‘matter out of place’ (Douglas, 1966:32). By association, the places that surfers claimed as their territory were rendered both dirty and undesirable for people outside the subcultural loop. We suggest that these moves resulted in the possibility for surfers to reclaim cultural space and reverse the alienating experiences precipitated by commercial productions.

Key References

Session Discussant
Douglas Brownlie, University of Stirling
The discussant, Douglas Brownlie, then proceeded to raise issues of embodiment and syncopation. Eventually, he produced his horn and brought the audience to their feet, clapping in time and chanting “consumer research” at appropriate musical moments. The performance might be regarded as an attempt to re-inscribe music studies within consumer research as a visceral and transformative agent bringing forth altered states of consciousness and holding the potential of resistance, code-switching and eventual emancipation. The implication for the special session is that care must be taken to limit music as a discursive agent for resistance (or at worst, a mere adornment for powerpoint presentations) but to also frame musicality as embodiment in terms of beauty, sexuality and pleasure. Through his jazz performance, Brownlie sought to work and rework practices already inscribed on our bodies, drawing attention to the intersubjective and embodied features of social action and encouraging us to move beyond framing music within a consumption-production nexus.
SESSION SUMMARY

It is now well-established that consumers form special bonds with brands and celebrities (Fournier 1998). This session was organized around three tightly connected presentations that analyze the evolution of consumers’ relationships with commercial referents.

The session began with a paper by Paul Connell and Hope Schau of the University of Arizona on those relationships that emerge early in consumers’ lives. Consumers’ relationships with artifacts from childhood are explored and their contributions to the consumers’ selves are analyzed through depth interviews and netnographic data. Fournier (1998) referred to these relationships as Childhood Friendships, and defined them as infrequently engaged, affectively laden relationships reminiscent of earlier times that yield comfort and security of the past self. Emergent themes in Connell and Schau’s research indicate that that Childhood Friendships also play an important role in building and sustaining the current self. Animated spokescharacters provide a useful meaning repository for public presentation of the self in cyberspace since they are pervasive and have become part of the consumer culture.

The session continued with research focused on the diffusion of a commercial persona by Kristine de Valec, Gachoucha Kretz and Dina Rasolofoarison of HEC School of Management in Paris. The case study of an emerging celebrity, a young French rapper called Kamini, highlights trends in the spontaneous development of brand relationships by consumers in the marketplace. They show how the viral diffusion of a new creative product, such as a song, radically changes traditional meaning-making processes. Instead of the top-down approach in which product positioning is carefully constructed and transferred to consumers, marketers are faced with a bottom-up trend in which consumers increasingly participate in blogs and online forums to talk about products (thus, creating and diffusing meaning) before any marketing action is undertaken. Their research aims to understand the interactions and tensions between market forces that result from this pro-active role of the consumer.

The concluding paper by Cristel Russell, of Auckland University of Technology, and Hope Schau, of the University of Arizona, focused on the final phases of consumers’ relationships. Drawing from the literature on grief and mourning, they analyze the process consumers go through when their favorite television characters go off the air. Survey and observational data collected during and following the final seasons of three television programs provide insights into the grieving period, the ceremonies and rituals associated with the final episode, ways of coping with the loss of parasocial friends, and the mechanisms viewers put in place for remembering and respecting them.

Together, the three presentations highlight key phases of consumer-brand relationships, from birth to death. Sidney Levy, the Coca Cola Distinguished Professor of Marketing at the University of Arizona, added his own insights. The title of this session was inspired by his pioneering work on “the psychodynamics of interpersonal relations” (1956) and, in particular, his analysis of the phases of relationships that audience members develop with public personalities (Levy 1962). Sidney shared his views on the evolution of consumer-brand relationships and his thoughts on how researchers can tackle this complex but fascinating phenomenon.

ABSTRACTS

“Once Upon A Time: Childhood Relationships and their Role in the Self-Memory System”
Paul M. Connell, University of Arizona
Hope Jensen Schau, University of Arizona

Brand spokescharacters have become a pervasive part of popular culture. These characters have transcended the realm of advertising and product packaging and now carry symbolic meaning to consumers. Brand spokescharacters serve as a means to give personality to the plethora of choices that line grocery shelves. The symbolic meaning of Dig’ em the Frog and Sugar Bear serve as a diverting way to differentiate two virtually identical sweetened puffed wheat cereals: Kellogg’s Honey Smacks and Post Golden Crisp (the current euphemistic names of products formerly known as Sugar Smacks and Super Sugar Crisp).

Consumers build relationships with brands in much the same way they would with other people (Fournier 1998). One of these many relationships is the Childhood Friendship. Childhood Friendships are affect-laden relationships that are reminiscent of earlier times, and yield feelings of comfort and security to the past self. The past self is accessed via autobiographical memory. While there is some debate over the exact definition of autobiographical memory, it generally consists of knowledge that makes up the story of one’s life. Autobiographical memory is of fundamental significance for the self, for emotions, and for the experience of personhood, that is, for the experience of enduring as an individual, in a culture, over time (Conway and Pleydell-Pearce 2000). Conway and Pleydell-Pearce (2000) propose that the self and the autobiographical memory store are two independent systems that interact with one another in a Self-Memory System. One’s memories shape the sense of self, and one’s sense of self creates the filter through which the world is perceived and autobiographical memories are encoded and retrieved. The goals of the self play a major role in both the encoding and accessibility of autobiographical memories. Highly accessible autobiographical memories are those that had high self-relevance when originally encoded, and the most accessible are those that retain a high level of self-relevance at retrieval (Conway and Holmes 2004).

Media characters provide a convenient meaning repository for expressing the self since they have become part of the popular culture and are easily recognized by many. Commercial referents such as cereal spokescharacters have become a sort of shorthand for creating complex meanings based on their symbolic properties (Levy 1959; Schau and Gilly 2003). The purpose of this research is to explore the childhood friendship relationship with consumables, and how individuals not only use Childhood Friendships to engage affective memories of the past self, but also use them to build and maintain the current sense of self. Netnographic inquiry (ethnography of Internet users) was employed in order to unobtrusively observe the personal websites and blogs of 65 individuals (Kozinets 2002). Blogs are a type of personal web page where the author typically writes a personal diary of thoughts on a regular basis. An advantage of naturalistically collecting in situ data is that the researcher does not produce demand effects, and there is no social compulsion on the observed individuals’ part to give socially desirable responses or to distort responses for research purposes.
These postings about cereal spokescharacters yielded more than 400 printed web pages.

Eleven informants that created the web postings related to animated cereal spokescharacters were recruited from the pool of 65 personal web sites and blogs in order to participate in depth interviews. In order to accommodate the geographic dispersion and communication preferences of the informants, eight interviews were conducted over the telephone and three interviews were conducted via instant messaging. While the telephone interviews yielded a greater quantity of data than instant messaging interviews over a similar time period, similar themes emerged between the two interview types. Interview questions were kept broad initially with grand tour questions and were structured loosely so that informants could discuss topics in a way that would seem natural to them, and in order to facilitate interviewer-interviewee rapport (McCracken 1988a). Prompted questions were used to probe informant responses more deeply in order to explore research themes. Overall, the 11 interviews ultimately yielded 144 pages of single-spaced transcribed data.

Identical behaviors have greater impact on the self-concept when performed publicly rather than privately (Tice 1992). Since these informants create postings about these characters on the Internet, a public but anonymous forum, we find that childhood consumption referents are accessed not only in order to gain affective rewards linked to the past self, but also serve as a means of building and maintaining the sense of self in the three ways. First, childhood consumption referents provide a conduit for creativity, which enhances a positive sense of self (Belk 1988; Csikszentmihalyi 1996). Informants in this study used childhood consumption referents creatively in two ways: by altering the advertiser’s narrative in a phenomenon known as textual poaching (Jenkins 1992), and by identifying with characters in order to create a narrative about the past self, the current self, or the ideal self.

Second, childhood consumption referents help in building bridges to close relationships, other possible selves, and life projects. In close relationships, cognitive representations of the self and other often overlap (Belk 1988; Cialdini et al 1997). Informants described attachment to objects connected with the childhood self, fondly remembered childhood memories of consumption with their parents, and sought to engage in shared consumption with their own children. Informants that did not have their own children used childhood consumption referents in building a life project. For example, one informant has published a book comprised of advertising icons directed toward children from his own childhood.

Finally, memories of childhood consumption can contribute to perceived self-improvement. As actual time increases, individuals become more critical of their earlier selves, conceivably in order to create the illusion that they have improved over time (Wilson and Ross 2003). While informants strategically used cereal spokescharacters as a means of building and maintaining the self, most of them expressed that they no longer consumed the associated products because their tastes had changed and they now preferred less sugary, healthier cereals, and many proclaimed their reticence to allow their own children to consume the same cereals they blogged about.

“Show Bizz Becomes Show Buzz; How Viral Diffusion Changes the Traditional Meaning-Making Process of a Rising Star”  
Kristine de Valck, HEC School of Management, Paris  
Gachoucha Kretz, HEC School of Management, Paris  
Dina Rasolofoarison, HEC School of Management, Paris  
France, July 2006: a 26-year old male nurse, Kamini, who aspires to a career in music sends his self-produced song and accompanying video to several record labels by means of an exclusive Internet link. On September 11, 2006, a trainee, who finds the clip amusing, posts the link on a trendy website that is frequently visited by influencers in the music and designer scene. Within hours, the video is viewed by a couple of hundreds website visitors, many of which spread the link among their friends and acquaintances. Within days, thousands of people click on the link and watch the video. Exposure continues to grow exponentially: Kamini is invited on national television and radio shows, and his success story is widely covered in the press and on the Internet. Once the buzz has proven his potential (by the end of October, 5.5 million people saw the video), the record labels are quick to offer him a contract and he signs with RCA (Sony Music) at the beginning of November for two albums. Only two months after his entrance in the public arena, Kamini is a celebrity and a new-born star.

Kamini’s case is an example of the growing number of wanna-be stars that have encountered success thanks to personal publishing sites such as YouTube or MySpace. Creative work that stands out can quickly gain momentum through the principle of viral diffusion. The selection and marketing methods that are ordinarily used by the creative industry to launch new singers, bands, movies, and shows are carefully crafted to reach an optimal mix of messenger(s), content, channel(s), and target audience. However, instant celebrities like Kamini are in many respects predefined by their success before marketers enter. As a result, the meaning-making process is no longer first prescribed by the industry, but has already taken shape in the marketplace through fans, media, and commentators. The extant research has examined the interplay of meaning-making processes between producers and consumers in the context of established brands (e.g., Kozinets 2001, Muniz and O’Guinn 2001; Schau and Gilly 2003), and brands that have been abandoned by the producer (Muniz and Schau 2005). Our paper intends to contribute to this stream of research by focusing on the introductory period when a brand (or human brand [cf., Thomson 2006]) acquires meaning in the eyes of consumers. Specifically, we are interested in situations where the Internet has played a defining role in engaging a diverse audience in meaning-making processes, and diffusing these meanings around the globe, before marketers have had their say. With the constant development of digital technologies that allow people to create, connect, and communicate, consumers’ role in the marketplace is increasingly pro-active instead of reactive. 1 Insight into the tensions and interactions of meaning-making processes between market forces surrounding brand introductions, and the tactics and strategies that are employed to deal with differences in meaning, is important to inform our understanding and theory-building of the dynamics of today’s marketplace.

This paper uses the rise of Kamini as a case study to examine how the various players in the marketplace negotiate the meaning and positioning of a new (human) brand that wins an audience before it is commercially marketed. Data collection started on day one of the buzz and will continue at least until the release and reception of Kamini’s first album, planned for Spring 2007. It consists of archiving all posts on Kamini’s official website, as well as transcribing and coding them. 1

1 A telling anecdote is the buzz generated before the Summer 2006 release of Snakes on a Plane, a New Line Cinema (NLC) movie featuring Samuel L. Jackson. Fans of Jackson were so intrigued by the title that they invented stories lines, dialogues, and alternative settings up to the point where NLC ordered five days of additional re-shooting to incorporate feedback of the fans. On fans’ probing, the movie was also upgraded from a PG-13 to a R-rating (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snakes_on_a_Plane).
as all posts and comments on 28 purposefully selected blogs that are considered as opinionating because of their rich content and wide readership. Furthermore, we register all traditional media coverage of Kamini in France, and all Kamini-related marketing actions undertaken by RCA. Together, these sources provide a rich, developing data set containing many (re)presentations of Kamini (in texts, images, video, and audio) that can inform us about meaning-making processes. Our analysis, which draws from semiotics (Mick 1986; Peirce 1960), focuses on how these processes interact, and how they develop over time.

Preliminary analysis makes clear that the public discourse is dominated by themes of originality, complicity, and authenticity. Kamini, who is black, presents himself as the anti-thesis to the stereotypes of gang member and rap artist. His song tells of his childhood in rural France where he suffered from solitude and racism, but the tone is non-aggressive and full of self-spot. The video, taped in his home town, features waving neighbors, dancing friends, and numerous cows. Initial influencers, appreciating him mainly for being original, find his clip humorous, his lyrics ‘fresh’, and his music so-so. Quickly, Kamini emerges as a ‘spokesperson’ for those that recognize themselves in his story of being different from the rest and growing up in a remote area: he makes them feel connected to the rest and growing up in a remote area: he makes them feel proud of their origin. Traditional media invent the label ‘rural rapper’. In the blogger community, Kamini is appropriated to serve all kinds of causes: marketers use him to explain how to generate buzz, politicians use him to show some failure or success of the social system, etc. Some bloggers question Kamini’s authenticity.

In their eyes, Kamini is a ‘spoof’ orchestrated by the music industry to launch their latest concept. To tackle these allegations, Kamini repeatedly explains how he made the video with the help of some friends, that it was never intended for public viewing, and that his sudden success has come as a surprise. RCA’s first marketing action is an online quiz about Kamini’s provincial hometown. Thus, RCA strengthens Kamini’s image of rural rapper. Simultaneously, Kamini uses interviews to distance himself from this image, talking constantly about the other ‘concepts’ he wants to develop.

The presentation involved a thick description of the interactions and tensions between the five market forces that play a key role in Kamini’s meaning-making process: (1) the fans, (2) the traditional media, (3) the opinion leaders that maintain personal or professional blogs, (4) RCA, and, (5) Kamini himself.

“Until Cancelled Do Us Part.: Mourning the Loss of A Relationship”
Cristel Antonia Russell, Auckland University of Technology
Hope Jensen Schau, University of Arizona

The final paper in this session focused on how consumers manage ending relationships. Few consumption experiences persist as long as that of television series which often last several years. The relationships that viewers develop with the characters within the series form and evolve much like interpersonal relationships (Russell and Puto 1999). Thus, the loss experienced when television series end can be paralleled to the loss of other social relationships. In particular, when viewers are highly connected (Russell et al 2004) and experience strong parasocial relationships with the television characters, the period of mourning is likely to be similar to that following the real loss of a friend.

Drawing from the literature on grief and mourning, we analyze the process consumers go through when their favorite television characters go off the air. The theoretical framework is derived from Worden’s model of the grieving process (1991). He identified a series of tasks that must be accomplished for successful recuperation following a loss. Individuals must accept the reality of the loss, then work through the pain of the grief, before they can adjust to an environment where the deceased is missing, and be able to move on with their lives. This last phase may include developing relationships that can fulfill the roles previously performed by the deceased.

Survey and observational data were collected during and just following the final seasons of three television programs. In each study, respondents were recruited on the basis of their history with the television series. In the first study, 262 fans of Friends were contacted several months after the final episode of the program aired. In the second study, viewers of The West Wing and Will & Grace participated in the study the week after the final episode of their favorite program aired. The online survey instrument gathered both quantitative and qualitative data regarding the respondent’s history of consumption of the television series, their degree of connectedness to the television program and its characters (Russell, Norman, and Heckler 2004), and their emotional and behavioral responses to the final episode. In both studies, the majority of the respondents had watched the television program since the very beginning, or over six years.

The quantitative survey findings indicate that the more connected viewers were to the television characters, the more difficult the grieving period was. Viewers who had developed intense relationships with the characters experience a greater sense of loss, and as a result, express more anxiety and sadness due to the ending television series. They have a more difficult time letting go and moving on. Less connected viewers were more likely to rationalize the loss by claiming that it was time to move on.

Qualitative observations provide insights into the separation phase, in particular the ceremonies and rituals associated with the final episode. We observed that, in order to cope with the loss of their parasocial friends, viewers often relied on their social networks. Some viewers eased the pain of saying goodbye by participating in a social gathering to celebrate the end and reminisce about the past. For instance, one of our respondents reported attending a themed party organized by a friend for a small group of “real fans” of the West Wing in honor of the final episode. She reported that “The host wore an academic gown and was the Chief Justice, there to swear in the new president, … There was a West Wing trivia contest, and the winner got a finger towel with the White House insignia on it. There were also chocolates with the faces of Presidents and first ladies on the wrappers.” Without such socialization process, the sense of loss is likely to be prolonged, in a fashion similar to when people are not able to talk openly and discuss the loss of a loved one (Brown 1989). Thus, much like wakes and funerals, these rituals are important social events that provide an opportunity to socialize, honor the “deceased,” and comfort family and friends (Crissman 2004).

The findings also illustrate the mechanisms viewers put in place for remembering and respecting their missing parasocial friends. For instance, through reruns and recordings, the viewers are able to relive their favorite moments and cherish the memories of their missing friends. Similarly, connected viewers are more likely to seek out the characters in their spin-off afterlife. For instance, highly connected viewers of Friends were more likely to have watched the television series Joey, casting one of the Friends’ characters. However, interestingly, although the spin-off allowed Friends fans to maintain high levels of parasocial attachment with Joey, the spin-off without the entire cast accentuated the sadness and anxiety associated with the departure of the other friends leaving many viewers sad and disappointed.

The discontinuation of an emotional bond brings distress and grief (Bowlby 1979) and this process applies to those relationships that consumers form with products or services. Collectively, the
studies provide insights into how consumers deal with the loss of a relationship and suggest an agenda for continuing research in the final phases of relationships.

REFERENCES

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SESSION SUMMARY
The objective of the proposed session was to stimulate discussion and encourage research on the dynamic relationship between the self and consumer contexts. Researchers have argued that consumers evaluate and choose brands on the basis of whether they express aspects of the self to others, or fulfill some self-enhancement or self-verification goal. Although research has clearly shown that consumers evaluate and choose brands based on these self-related motivations (thereby forming self-brand connections (SBC)), several research questions remain unanswered—Are there important moderators to consider that would further illuminate the relationship between the self and consumption? Additionally, research has explored the influence of brand evaluations on SBC, but to what extent might SBC affect brand evaluations? Finally, a major assumption is that consumers bring salient and relevant self-concepts to the brand consumption context, however to what extent might the consumption context influence consumers’ self-concepts? The aim of this session was to shed some light on these research questions.

Paper #1, by Escalas and Bettman, questioned the simple manner in which researchers currently view how consumers’ views of the self drive consumption and present findings on how self-enhancement goals and brand symbolism moderate the influence of brand meaning on self-brand connections. Paper #2, by Cheng, White and Chaplin, challenged the unidirectional assumption that brand evaluations/attitudes determine SBC, and presented results that suggested a feedback effect. Specifically, the authors suggested that when consumers make a SBC, brand-evaluation will become an important component of self-evaluation, and therefore, is likely to be affected by whether consumers make SBC. Paper #3, by Forehand, Perkins, and Reed II, added another dimension of complexity to the relationship between the self-concept and consumer contexts by questioning whether consumers always bring their identities to the context. The authors presented evidence to show that social identities are automatically influenced by contextual information about others. Each paper moved away from the simple way in which researchers currently view the role of the self-concept in consumer contexts and provided empirical evidence to shed some light on the dynamic nature of this relationship (e.g., introduced moderators and challenged assumptions).

Together, these three papers provided a fresh perspective to study the relationship between the self and consumer contexts. The current view is that individuals’ self-concepts shape their consumer behavior. The emerging view from these papers is that while the self certainly drives consumption, it is more complicated than we think (as paper #1 suggests). Moreover, the directional relationship between the self and consumption may also be more complicated than we think (as paper #2 suggests). Finally, the self may not always drive consumption, but rather be driven by consumption (as paper #3 suggests). Each paper makes additional contributions. First, Escalas and Bettman provide an empirical demonstration of the ideas in McCracken’s (1989) theory of meaning movement by demonstrating that brands endorsed by celebrities are a source of symbolic brand meaning. In doing so, they provide additional evidence that consumers use brands to communicate their self-concept. Cheng et al., merged the brand extension/dilution and the self-concept literatures to show how SBC can have a feedback effect and influence brand evaluations. Forehand et al., contributed to the advertising literature by showing that ad exposure has a profound effect on not just changes in brand attitude or purchase intentions, but also social identities.

In summary, this session presented a dynamic view of the relationship between consumers’ self-concepts and consumption activities. That is, while consumers’ views of the self drive consumption, these views are also constantly being shaped by the consumption context itself. This perspective paves new avenues for research, such as the potential for consumption activities to transform consumers (via transformation of self-concept) and for contextual factors to determine the self-consumption relationship.

ABSTRACTS

“Celebrity Endorsement and Self-Brand Connections”
Jennifer Edson Escalas, Vanderbilt University
James R. Bettman, Duke University

We propose that consumers purchase brands in part to construct self-concepts and, in so doing, form self-brand connections. We focus on celebrity endorsements as a source of brand meaning. Results from our first experiment show that brands with images consistent with a celebrity endorser enhance self-brand connections for consumers when they like the celebrity, but harm them when consumers dislike the celebrity. A second study tests our prediction that the influence of celebrity endorsement will differ depending on whether the consumer has active self-enhancement goals, such that the influence of celebrities will be greater for higher self-enhancement needs.

“The Role of Self-Brand Connections in Brand Evaluations”
Shirley Y.Y. Cheng, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Tiffany Barnett White, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Lan Nguyen Chaplin, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

An impressive body of research demonstrates that individuals use products to create and communicate their self-concepts (e.g., Belk 1988; Sirgy 1982; Solomon 1986). Particularly interesting in this regard are consumer brands, which are ideally suited to this process given the wide availability of brands and the range of distinctive brand images they reflect (e.g., Fournier 1998; Muniz and O’Guinn 2001; Schouten and McAlexander 1995). Consumers can appropriate associations belonging to brands, such as user characteristics or personality traits, and incorporate them into their self-concepts, thereby forming self-brand connections (SBC) (Escalas and Bettman 2003).

The prevailing view of how brands are related to the self-concept is that consumers engage in a matching process to identify products or brands that are congruent with their self-images (Gardner and Levy 1955). Escalas and Bettman (2003) adopt a prototype matching view, where individuals imagine prototypical users of alternative brands and select ones that maximize similarity to their actual or desired self-concept, thereby forging a self-brand connection. In short, current research examines how brand-evaluations affect whether consumers make SBC (i.e., Brand-evaluations → SBC). Is it possible that a feedback effect might be
operative (i.e., SBC → Brand-evaluations)? In other words, once consumers have made a SBC, how resilient are their brand evaluations when, for example, the brand’s favorable image becomes questionable? Are consumers likely to defend their brand-evaluations given their strong SBC? Or, are they likely to change their brand-evaluations given the obvious challenges to the brand’s image? More research is needed to address questions of this nature.

This research investigates the role that self-brand connections play in brand evaluations. Of particular interest is the question of how high SBC consumers evaluate the parent brand when it launches a poor brand extension. To date, the brand extension literature has examined the process through which brand extension performance can affect evaluations of the parent brand in a positive (i.e., parent brand enhancement) versus negative (i.e., parent brand dilution) manner. A key finding is that the effect of extension performance on parent brand evaluations depends upon the perceived typicality of the extension. Negative extension performance leads to brand dilution for typical, but not atypical brand extensions (Loken and John 1993). Our research investigates how this process could be affected by consumers’ existing SBC. We argue that when consumers make a SBC, brand evaluation becomes an important component of self-evaluation. We know from the psychology literature that individuals are predisposed to try to maintain positive self-evaluation (Tesser 2000; Brown, Collins and Schmidt 1988). Therefore, in order to maintain a positive self-evaluation and avoid a potential threat to the self, it is likely that consumers with high versus low SBC will evaluate the parent brand favorably, even when the brand extension is objectively poor on multiple dimensions.

In study 1, we test the effects of extension typicality and extension performance on brand evaluations for consumers with high versus low SBC. We successfully replicated the typicality effect on brand dilution for those with low SBC. Specifically, we found a significant typicality by performance interaction on brand evaluation. In face of negative extension performance, low-SBC participants evaluated Apple (i.e., the target brand) less favorably when the extension is a printer (i.e., typical) than when it is a watch (i.e., atypical). As predicted, however, this effect was attenuated for high-SBC participants—parent brand evaluations were equally favorable regardless of extension typicality. As previously alluded to, we suggest that two factors set the stage for this effect. First, individuals are predisposed to maintain positive self-evaluation. Second, when consumers make SBC, brand-evaluations contribute to self-evaluations. Consequently, high-SBC consumers view poor extensions as a threat to their self and therefore evaluate poor extensions favorably in order to maintain a positive self-evaluation. To further explore this account, we look to Tesser’s (2000) study, which showed that when the self is threatened, people seek to self-affirm. Following this notion, we should expect the effect of SBC on brand-evaluation to be attenuated when consumers are given the opportunity to self-affirm.

In study 2 we test whether self-affirmation attenuates the effects shown in study 1 in a 2 (SBC: high versus low) x 2 (Self Affirmation Task: Present vs. Absent) factorial. Our results show that the otherwise positive influence of high SBC on parent brand evaluations was indeed eliminated when respondent were given the opportunity to self-affirm in another domain. After completing a task in which participants described the values that are most important to them, high SBC participants evaluated the parent brand less favorably than high SBC participants who do not self-affirm, and equally favorable as those low in SBC.

Taken together, these results provide mounting evidence in support of our account of why and how SBC affect brand evaluations. In so doing, we augment existing literature on the influence of SBC as well as research in the brand extensions literature, which has not examined the influence of SBC on parent brand enhancement and dilution. Future research designed to further explore the proposed mechanism, as well as to rule out important alternative explanations is underway.

Selected References

“Shaping Social Identity”
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Social identity influences a wide variety of consumer behaviors and attitudes. Consumer social identity is especially powerful to the extent that the identity is salient in the immediate social or contextual environment. In these situations, the activation of a social identity motivates the consumer to actively engage in social comparison, to express identity-consistent beliefs, and to select products that reinforce the desired social identity. Although understanding the influence of social identity on consumer behavior is clearly important, the extent research within consumer behavior has largely studied the phenomenon as a unidirectional process. That is, research has started with the belief that consumers bring certain social identities to consumption contexts and that these identities influence judgment to the extent that they are salient and relevant. Although it is certainly true that consumers do bring a variety of social identities with them into consumer contexts, past research downplays the dynamic nature of social identity. Social identities do not spontaneously appear within consumers—rather, they are shaped by a lifetime of experience, social interaction, and self-expression. Research on this phenomenon has largely argued that consumers choose brands in an attempt to express aspects of the self to others, or fulfill some self-enhancement or self-verification goal. Although these motivations do drive much of consumer social identity-formation, it is also clear that social identities are automatically influenced by contextual information about others. It is this latter automatic influence on consumer social identity that we focus on in this project. Specifically, we explore the influence of advertising exposure on the association strength between depicted social identities and the consumer’s sense of self, independent of any explicit attempt at self-presentation. We argue that the influence of advertising exposure on consumer social identity is greatest when the advertising makes direct use of identity-relevant cues or generally targets specific identity groups. Exposure to such advertising can activate the relevant social identity dimension in a consumer’s self-concept, and this activation can lead to either assimilation toward or contrast with the depicted identity.

Following an assimilation/contrast model, we assess the extent to which ad exposure directly influences the strength of
association of basic social identity dimensions in the self-concept. Moreover, we identify two factors that determined whether consumer self-concept shifted toward the presented user imagery (assimilation) or away from the presented user imagery (contrast): (1) the discrepancy between the objective age of the characters in the advertisement and the consumer’s own chronological age, and (2) whether consumers directly assessed whether they were in or out of the advertisement’s target market.

To test the effects of processing focus and social identity discrepancy on consumer assimilation/contrast responses to advertising, three experiments were conducted. Experiment 1 investigated whether or not consumer social identity itself is easily malleable and whether exposure to advertising user imagery alone is enough to shape social identity. Consumers were exposed to advertising that featured individuals who differed in age from the consumer, either younger or older. After viewing this focal age-targeted advertisement, consumers evaluated the advertising and completed an Implicit Association Test (IAT) that measured how strongly they self-identified with youth as part of their self-concept. The results of experiment 1 suggested that subjects assimilated their self concept toward the depicted user imagery; those subjects who saw ads that were targeted at pre-teens revealed a stronger self-youth association than those who viewed ads that were targeted at 30-something adults. Experiment 2 built upon experiment 1 by investigating two potential moderators of the observed assimilation response: 1) the degree of discrepancy between the participant’s chronological age and the age of the users depicted in the ad and 2) the processing focus of the consumers (i.e. whether they directly assessed whether they were in or out of the advertisement’s target market). It was hypothesized that assimilation is the likely response to others that are moderately discrepant and contrast is the likely response to others that are extremely discrepant. In addition, it is hypothesized that assimilation and contrast responses will be moderated by processing focus. Specifically, when a processing goal is encouraged that prompts consumers to compare themselves to the depicted users, the effects of assimilation and contrast should amplify. To test these hypotheses, a new set of age-based advertisements were developed that included a control condition (college-age users), a moderately age-discrepant condition (30-something users), and an extremely age-discrepant condition (senior citizen users). Processing focus was also manipulated such that some participants engaged in an evaluation of their target market status prior to completing measures of self-association while other participants did not. Consistent with this predicted pattern of results, an interaction of ad type and target market evaluation was observed on subsequent self-youth association: subjects assimilated their self-concepts toward the moderately discrepant targets, but contrasted away from the extremely discrepant targets. In addition, these assimilation and contrast responses were amplified when the consumers initially assessed their target market status.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Extant literature reports the widespread use by marketing practitioners of visual art as a tool (Hoffman 2002; Martorella 1996). However, virtually no research exists to provide insight and understanding for the strategic use of this tool to meet marketing objectives (Margolin 1992). The current research represents an initial step to systematically analyze the influence of visual art on consumer evaluations of products. With three studies, we examine the phenomenon of art infusion, which we define as the influence that the presence of art has on consumer perceptions and evaluations of products with which it is associated. We theorize that perceptions of luxury spill over from art, creating more favorable evaluations of these products.

The Perception of Art

In this research, we adopt a consumer-focused perspective, namely that art is that which is categorized by the viewers as such (Bourdieu and Darbel 1997; Dewey 1989). This definition is important, as it is the viewers’ or consumers’ perception that matters in this context, notwithstanding scholarly debates about what does or does not constitute art. Evidence supporting a general schema was also found in a descriptive survey conducted by the authors. Based on these self-reports, on extant research (Hagtværd, Hagtværd, and Patrick 2007), and on a review of art history (e.g., Tansey and Kleiner 1996), artworks may be identified as those works perceived as embodying human expression, where a perceived main feature of the work is the manner of its creation and/or execution rather than just a concept, idea, or message underlying it or conveyed by it, and where this manner is not primarily driven by any other contrived function or utility. Although there is little or no restriction on what may be successfully marketed as art in the contemporary art market, the average consumer nonetheless appears to be capable of distinguishing between works characterized by the creativity and skill of an artist and works characterized primarily by marketing efforts. While it seems reasonable that training enhances this ability in viewers, it also seems reasonable that with the emergence and development of visual art through the millennia of prehistory, perhaps tied to aesthetics as a pre-linguistic form of communication (e.g., Averill, Stanat, and More 1998; Lindgaard and Whitfield 2004), even untrained viewers are able to identify visual art as a distinct category of human expression.

Art Infusion

Several theoretical perspectives shed light on how the properties of art may spill over on products, including classical conditioning (Gorn 1982), halo effects (Balzer and Sulsky 1992), and contagion (Rozin, Millman, and Nemeroff 1986). In line with such perspectives, we propose that visual art may influence consumer evaluations of the products with which the art is associated, while the type of influence will follow from how art itself is perceived. At a general level, art is associated with a heritage of culture, it has historically represented a special kind of quest for excellence, and it has connotations of luxury and exclusivity (Hoffman 2002; Margolin 1992; Martorella 1996; Tansey and Kleiner 1996). We propose that a product infused with art will take on these connotations, causing more favorable product evaluations. This phenomenon is not tied to the content of a specific artwork, but to a general schema for art.

Study 1: Establishing the Phenomenon

The objective of this study was to demonstrate that the presence of visual art leads to enhanced evaluation of consumer products due to a spillover of luxury perceptions. In this study, 107 participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: an advertisement for bathroom fittings featuring the painting Girl with a Pearl Earring by Johannes Vermeer, a photograph of Scarlett Johansson posing as the Girl with a Pearl Earring, or no image. Thus, context was identical for the two visual images. Results revealed that product evaluation and perceptions of luxury were significantly higher for the art image, and that the perceptions of luxury fully mediated the influence of art on product evaluation.

Study 2: Further Establishing Content Independence

Seventy-six undergraduates participated in this study, using a soap dispenser as the stimulus with three experimental conditions (one of three images on the front face of the soap dispenser: artwork pre-tested to elicit positive affect vs. artwork eliciting negative affect vs. decorative non-art image, with same content as positive artwork). The art-conditions of differing valence were incorporated to control for the alternative explanation that the content of the artwork could be driving the results rather than the general connotations of art. The non-art image was also included to demonstrate that the art, not the content of the image, was driving the results.

Results revealed that for both product evaluation and perceptions of luxury, the two artworks caused significantly higher ratings than did the non-art image, while there was no difference between the two artworks. Further, the perceptions of luxury fully mediated the influence of art on product evaluation.

Study 3: Real World Replication

A deal was contracted with a local restaurant to survey 100 of their patrons in exchange for conducting a customer satisfaction survey. One hundred people participated in the study (53% male, 47% female; $\bar{M}_{age}=43$ years; average family income=$5,600 per month). The product to be evaluated was a typical set of silverware (a set of a spoon, fork, knife, teaspoon, and steak knife), exhibited in custom-made black velvet boxes with white satin lining. The top of the box had a print of either Van Gogh’s Café Terrace at Night (art image) or a photograph of a café at night (non-art image). Participants were fleetingly exposed to the front face of the box before it was opened and then answered a set of questions about the silverware. Results revealed higher product evaluations and perceptions of luxury for the art condition, and perceptions of luxury fully mediated the influence of art on product evaluation.
Advertising Authenticity: Resonating Replications of Real Life
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Authenticity is important in several marketing domains including service delivery (Arnould and Price 1993), consumer rituals (Wallendorf and Arnould 1991), consumer possessions (Grayson and Shulman 2000), advertising (Stern 1994), and servicescapes (Arnould, Price, and Tierney 1998). However, we still have little empirical support for its importance and only limited theoretical understanding of what is meant by authenticity and its relationship to consumer responses. The purpose of this research is to examine consumer perceptions of and reactions to authentic advertisements.

Understanding authenticity and its use in, and relation to, advertising and marketing rests upon understanding: (1) how authenticity is understood in general, (2) how marketing’s understanding of authenticity is situated within this larger authenticity discourse, (3) how authenticity is specifically manifested in relation to advertisements, and (4) how authenticity is assessed.

While a concise and broadly accepted definition of authenticity is not readily accessible, authenticity is conceptualized in fairly consistent ways: authenticity is usually based on being historically grounded and/or rooted in traditional modes of production (Beverland 2005; Peterson 2005), being separate from the commercial sphere (Fine 2004; Kozinets 2002), or being true to the self (Goffman 1959; Trilling 1972). Grayson and Martinc (2004) build upon this base of authenticity and conceptualize two types of authenticity: indexical authenticity and iconic authenticity. Indexical authenticity refers to something that is believed to be the ‘the original’ or ‘the real thing.’ Iconic authenticity refers to something ‘whose physical manifestation resembles something that is indexically authentic’ (Grayson and Martinc 2004, p. 298), thereby capturing the essence of something that is indexically authentic.

Consumer researchers have started to blur the boundaries between what is considered an authentic object or person and experiencing or consuming authenticity. Specifically, some consumer research shows that experiences of authenticity are co-created through the interaction of the authentic object and the person experiencing that object (Arnould and Price 1993; Rose and Wood 2005). Authenticity is also increasingly applied to advertising. 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” (p.388).

A final important issue relating to authenticity is how it is assessed. Much of the authenticity work in marketing and consumer research to date has focused on a production view of assessing authenticity: determining if the product or brand origins are authentic. Authenticity assessments for brands and advertising in particular tend to focus on the company that sponsored the advertisement (e.g. Kates 2004) or the spokesperson featured in the advertisement (e.g. Till and Shimp 1998). Consumer researchers have spent less time exploring advertisement authenticity from the perspective of the advertisement viewer. Thus, the purpose of this research is to examine consumer perceptions of and reactions to authentic advertisements.

To understand perceptions of authentic advertisements, a series of stimuli-based depth interviews (Mick and Buhl 1992) were conducted with members of the distance running subculture. A subculture was chosen for this study because, for those involved in a subculture, the focal activity becomes an important part of their lifestyle, with commitment to the activity defined in terms of dominance over lifestyle (Donnelly 1981). I conducted interviews with 28 members of the distance running subculture during which I asked them to respond to 16 print advertisements representing a range of authenticities: common everyday experiences of running (similar to iconic authenticity), historical running images (indexical authenticity), and advertisements focusing on product attributes (not authentic). Important themes were uncovered using an iterative ‘back and forth’ reading process to uncover patterns both within and between informants.

Three primary themes emerged in this study. First, without any probing regarding authenticity, narratives surrounding the advertisements centered on discussions of authenticity. Specifically, informants frequently discussed their perceptions in terms of authenticity with comments relating to indexical authenticity, iconic authenticity, and a lack of authenticity. Second, self-referencing emerged repeatedly as an important factor in the evaluations of advertisements, serving as a link between assessing authenticity and liking the advertisement. Third, the importance of authentic advertisements being firmly rooted in everyday experience emerged as informants often differed in their authenticity perceptions of the same advertisement.

This study makes several important contributions to consumer research. First, it demonstrates the usefulness of the authentic advertisement concept in advertisement evaluations. Further, authenticity assessments seem to be primary filters for any brand or product information conveyed in the advertisement. That is, one might speculate that it is unlikely brand benefits would be evaluated if the advertisement did not first pass the authenticity test. Second, this study extends recent work on authenticity by showing that authenticity assessments, in the context of advertisements, are not objective judgments but are co-produced meanings: the combination of the advertisement’s content as well as the consumers’ experiences produces assessments of authenticity. Furthermore, it is the alignment of these two elements that impacts advertisement evaluation. Third, the importance of authenticity in advertisement assessments is demonstrated in the differences in authenticity perceptions, despite all informants sharing common experiences and lifestyles. These differences show authenticity assessments are strongly tied to the nuance of experience and provide support for the subjective view of authenticity: the construct of interest really becomes ‘perceived authenticity’ as objective views of what is or is not an authentic advertisement did not emerge in this study.

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A Moderated Perceptual Model of Product Aesthetic Evaluations
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Researchers in marketing and consumer behavior have begun to develop a theoretical base and a body of evidence pertaining to consumers’ evaluations of product aesthetics. However, statistical effects that are generalizable across products or settings have proven elusive. Although it could be argued that this reflects a pervasive idiosyncrasy in aesthetic evaluations, it may also be the case that existing models have not yet identified or accounted for “meaningful heterogeneity” in design evaluations (Holbrook 1986). We examine the potential for interactions between product and consumer characteristics to capture such meaningful heterogeneity.

In this research, we take a contingency perspective, where aesthetic preferences are seen as the result of systematic interactions between consumers’ and product designs’ characteristics. We propose that consumers hold mental models for each product category they consider and that products share aesthetic features that individuals can interpret in fairly consistent ways. For example, most consumers would tend to agree that an Apple iPod has a “unified, balanced and simple look,” yet they may disagree on how desirable each of these aesthetic properties is, and how much variation around each one they may enjoy or tolerate. We develop and test an integrative model that provides a more comprehensive account of how aesthetic evaluations are formed.

The model is built on four vectors of data: (1) consumers’ perceptions of a target product’s aesthetic characteristics, (2) consumers’ perceptions of the aesthetic characteristics of the self-identified “stereotypical” product in the category, (3) consumers’ perceptions of the aesthetic characteristics of their “ideal” product in the category, and (4) consumers’ own characteristics (in particular as measured by the Centrality of Visual Product Aesthetics, CVPA, Bloch, Brunel and Arnold 2003). Extending the existing conceptualization of the first three elements (Coates 2003), we undertake algebraic formalization of the relationships therein. Through the model, we build an aesthetics perceptual space for the product and category at hand. For a given product in a specific category, we can measure perceptual evaluations (using semantic differential scales) for a relevant series of aesthetic dimensions for the product, the category stereotype, and the category ideal. We can use these vectors of data to compute several perceptual distances and then locate each object in a perceptual space. The first distance of interest is the perceptual distance between the object and the stereotype ($DI_i$), and it can be conceptualized as a measure of novelty. The second measure of interest is the perceptual distance between the object and the ideal ($DI_i$), and can be conceptualized as a measure of design concinnity (i.e., harmony, beauty). Further, we can conceptualize the distance between the stereotype and the ideal as a measure of design potential.

Although previous conceptualizations have struggled to explain why different consumers place different weights on design characteristics that evoke stereotypicality versus novelty, we suggest that much of the variation arises from differences in CVPA. Briefly, the Centrality of Visual Product Aesthetics scale (CVPA; Bloch, Brunel, and Arnold 2003) measures the salience of visual design in a consumer’s relationships with products, specifically, it captures the extent to which a consumer (1) values design, (2) responds to design, and (3) evaluates design with skill (acumen). CVPA has been shown to moderate the effect of product design on aesthetic evaluations, product attitudes, purchase intentions, and willingness to pay (Bloch et al. 2003), yet no research has yet examined skill-related outcomes of CVPA.

To assess our conceptualization, we analyzed two national field experiments as well as a controlled laboratory experiment. The field experiments were carried out in conjunction with a major automobile manufacturer and involved nationally representative samples of sport utility drivers. The lab experiment involved university students who participated in return for course credit. Across these three studies, we find consistent empirical support for the notion that product aesthetic evaluation systematically varies with $DS_i$ and $DI_i$, and interacts with CVPA. This suggests that consumers’ aesthetic evaluations are not purely idiosyncratic but rather are a function of previous exposure to the category (as represented by the perceived category stereotype) as well as idealized notions of the category (as represented by the perceived category ideal).

Additionally, we find that the visual information conveyed in a product design is differentially available to consumers and that CVPA scores are predictive of this heterogeneity. Of course, it is important to keep in mind that consumers’ ability to recognize and categorize designs can be (but is not necessarily) independent of their design attitudes and preferences. Still, variations in skills may lead to variations in the informational inputs to attitudes and preferences, and we can expect consumers with greater skills to have greater attitude certainty, lower attitude ambivalence, and more precisely defined preferences. An important area for future research is to determine the reasons for differences in design evaluation skills. Candidate factors include differences in the way product shapes are stored in memory (e.g., verbal, visual), in knowledge structure (e.g., quantity, density, accessibility), and in visual acuity (e.g., bandwidth, resolution, resources).

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Not so Happily Ever After: Narrative Escapes from Unsustainable Identity Projects
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ABSTRACT

This paper extends the literature on consumer identity by investigating unsustainable identity projects. It is based on a study of aspiring fashion models and focuses on the cultural narratives models embrace when they begin their careers, those they drift toward at later points, and the process entailed in abandoning an identity project. The paper furthers our understanding of how consumers deal with the dissolution of an identity project, in this case, the consumption of the “model life,” and how they use alternative cultural narratives to help them cope with disappointment.

“It’s like a fairy tale...but it’s a joke you know”
MP (model, 28 yrs old)

The pursuit of valued identity projects and the consumption practices that attend upon this pursuit have been the subject of considerable research by the coterie of consumer culture theorists (e.g. Schouten 1991, Thompson 1996, Holt and Thompson 2004). The majority of those studies have focused on some aspect of the challenge of achieving a particular identity. Thompson (1999) and Tambahh (1999), for example, have studied the identity project of trying to be cosmopolitan, noting the tensions engendered between the masculinized meanings of travelling and the feminized meanings of dwelling in the paradoxical post-modern quest for authenticity as a cosmopolitan.

Less studied than the journey toward an identity, however, has been the experience of consumers who “arrive” at their desired identities, only to find that fully inhabiting and sustaining them is illusive if not impossible. Our paper addresses this gap in the literature by examining the experiences of women, who have pursued the fairytale identity of “fashion model,” who have achieved some measure of success in this pursuit, and who have struggled with the intrinsic instability of the idealized state.

While it is fair to say that much prior work has focused on consumer’s efforts to achieve an identity, some scholars have reflected on the experiences of consumers who “arrive” at their desired identity positions. Bell et al. (2003) have suggested that once a desired goal is reached, then a new identity quest is often undertaken. Thompson and Tambahh (1999) ponder whether consumers feel at home once their goal has been reached, and suspect that consumers might feel strangely out of place in a newly attained goal state, and may even regret pursuing that goal in the first place.

In this paper, we investigate the narrative constructions of identity abandonment, when consumers realize that, although they might have achieved their desired identity to some extent, sustaining it is hardly possible. Consistent with prior theorizing, we find that when the desired identity project is attained, a new identity might, indeed, be sought, though not because the current identity has nothing more to offer. Additionally, we find that discourses of authenticity are invoked to valorize the pursuit of “real” identities. That is, we find that in the process of disenchantment with unsustainable “faireytale” identities, the women in our study idealize other identities that are equally, but differently, culturally mythologized: identities of “real” womanhood and motherhood.

The object of this paper—to better understand how consumers confront unsustainable identities—is warranted on both theoretical and practical grounds. Theoretically, insight into identity “abandonment” extends our understanding of the identity concept that is of such central importance to our field (cf. Arnould and Thompson 2005). Practically, this undertaking matters in that other types of identity projects may also be found unsustainable: the athlete, the artist, and the graduate student identities are often difficult to maintain, not because one necessarily feels one has reached one’s goal and is ready to move on to another quest, but rather because of factors like aging, lack of financial resources, and insufficient grades, which, more often than not, are inherent to the pursuit of these identities.

Thus, we shall ask: What happens when consumers realize that an identity project is not sustainable? And how do they abandon an identity that was consumed with considerable pleasure? In answering these questions we found a variety of cultural narratives that appear to inform experiences of gaining a treasured identity, those of discovering the identity is unstable, and those of disengaging from an unsustainable identity.

METHOD

Data Collection. Between February and September 2005, we conducted in-depth interviews with eight fashion models in a large metropolitan area in Canada. With the help of an insider, individuals were contacted and asked if they would be willing to participate in a university research project seeking to gain a better understanding of fashion modelling. Most candidates stated that the topic was of great interest to them and expressed enthusiasm in regard to participating in the study. None of the informants were paid for the interviews and each participant was assured of full anonymity.

The interviews, conducted in various settings such as participants’ homes, cafés, and professional workplaces, typically ranged from 45 to 90 minutes and were conducted in either English or French, depending on the participant’s abilities and preferences. Every French transcript was translated into English by the lead author, who is bilingual. The informants were all women, aged between 21 and 41 years old, all white but for one black model, and had all worked in local and international markets, in both the editorial and the commercial modelling spheres. Some were well advanced in their careers, while others were at more preliminary stages. Further description of the informants is available from the authors.

The interviews typically began with a “grand tour” question (McCraken 1988a) about how the individual became a fashion model, and subsequently, the course of the dialogue was largely set by each participant using probes directed at attaining clarification and/or further elaboration. The verbatim transcripts served as the primary texts on which the interpretative account is based.

Data Analysis. This project started as an investigation of the field of fashion modelling. We were initially interested in exploring the fashion models’ goals, their conception of success, and their experiences of the pursuit of a consumption object coined as “the model life”, i.e. becoming a member of a small, elite group of models whose bodies and personas are intensely sought after for their aesthetic singularity, and who reap culturally celebrated rewards such as money, luxurious goods, and celebrity status (Parmentier and Fischer, forthcoming).

In the course of our investigation, it became clear that achieving some measure of success in the fashion modelling profession and enjoying some of its perks bring less enchantment than antici-
pated. Even though they wished to fully reach the model life, the fashion models we interviewed constantly questioned its essence and wondered why they struggled so hard to try to sustain an identity project in which, despite achieving some success, they also experienced a sense of failure. It appeared that our informants felt their identities as models could not be sustained. Whether the challenge was a need for a greater income, or their bodies had changed, or they had lost faith that their turn to be top model come, most had come to seek alternate identity projects and alternate narratives.

After reading the interviews several times, we discussed the emergent stories essential to our understanding of the informants’ lived experience and the pursuit of the model life. Our reading of the interviews was informed by the relevant literature on goal, desire, lived experience and the pursuit of the model life. Our reading of the emergent stories essential to our understanding of the informants narratives.

Narratives of Identity Emergence: Once upon a time

The Ugly Duckling

“I didn’t look anything like a model. I had buckteeth, so I needed braces… but with no intention of becoming a model. On top of that, my ears were sticking out. My mom asked me if I wanted them straightened out so I said ok. Then, at some point, I had turned 15, and I really looked like a model. It happened all very naturally, almost mystically.” MF (model, 28 yrs old)

While fashion models are typically considered to be the epitome of beauty, stories of skinny, flat-chested, odd little girls being mocked by their fellow mates populate our data. Models often tell us that, before entering the modelling world, they were considered by both themselves and others to be unattractive and even ugly. These narratives bear a striking resemblance to Hans Christian Andersen’s classic tale: “The Ugly Duckling”, a story about a grey duckling who, even though loved by his mother, can’t seem to fit among the others in the barnyard. After a period of persecution, he is driven away and wanders solitarily for a few seasons. By the end of the winter, when he almost freezes to death in an icy pond, he encounters some beautiful swans. Drawn to their beauty, he decides to approach them and to his astonishment, the ugly duckling finds himself welcomed by the swans; indeed, when he gazes at his reflection, he realizes that he IS a swan! Although, the children nearby declare him the most beautiful of them all, yet he isn’t proud for, as Anderson tells us, a good heart is never proud. And because of all that he has suffered, he now appreciates his happiness so much more. “It doesn’t matter that you were born in a duck yard, so long as you have lain inside a swan’s egg.” (Andersen 2005: 209). Model MJ’s story illustrates this tale in a modern (and human) context:

“When I was discovered at age sixteen, I was an unhappy kid, the kind of girl people love to pick on in high school. I was very, very thin, flat chested; I wore braces and I thought I looked awful. And I was discovered on the street by T, the agency’s owner, who left me his business card. And I was so naive; I didn’t know anything about this business, so naturally I grew suspicious. My parents weren’t exactly the protective type, but as soon as I told them about it, they said: “No, no, no; it looks fishy”. I kept his business card in my drawer for a whole year, and then one day, I saw a program on TV on fashion model Renée Lacombe, who was my age and that T had also discovered; so, I realized then that this guy was a professional, and I gave him a call. I went accompanied by my father’s girlfriend; I met everybody, and that’s how it started. I had my book and my photos done, but it took a long time to get really going. I still didn’t feel good with myself, so my photos didn’t look good; my body wasn’t fully grown yet, I didn’t look so good.

Interviewer: And how did it happen then (i.e. the modeling career)?

With experience. I’m one of those persons… I watch those sixteen year olds who come to the agency and feel completely at ease with themselves. I don’t know how they got to be that way! I was very shy. So this type of work helped me build self-confidence. And with more and more experience, I got rid of my timidity. Today, I feel totally relaxed. The fashion shows don’t give me the jitters any more. But when I started, I was filled with anxiety.” MJ (model, 22 yrs old)

We recognize the parallels between Andersen’s tale and MJ’s narrative, as she is transformed from misfit to perfect fit. Like the duckling, she too wandered for a while until she found her place. And though she has gained enough poise and self-confidence to overcome her jitters at fashions shows, it is apparent that she does not yet take for granted her newfound status. The ugly duckling tale, transported to this context, highlights the delight of discovering a sense of belonging to a restricted group that popular culture tells us is glamorous, enchanted and desirable. Not only does the model leave behind the outsider status that went with her initial awkwardness. She is miraculously transformed into a revered canonical beauty and an insider in an elite, restricted group.

Narratives of Dwelling and Drift within the Identity

One Thousand and One Nights

“Everyone is around you, doing your hair, make-up and you sort of feel like a queen you know.” H (model, 28 yrs old)
A recurrent theme in our informants’ stories about their embrace of the modeling profession is the excitement of a glamorous lifestyle, travel and luxuries. The narratives of their journeys in the modeling world feel at times like entering Ali Baba’s cave, full of treasures. The designer clothes, the assistants who do their hair and make-up, the gifts, the attention from men, and the potentially enormous incomes all contribute to the atmosphere of almost enchanted good fortune.

Tales of fantastic voyages, for instance find a parallel in sailor Sinbad’s fantastic adventures in the “One thousand and One nights.” Since fashion shows take place during particular periods throughout the year in different fashion capitals across the world, and since it is customary for models to change markets frequently in order to meet new clients and increase or renew one’s exposure in magazines and ad campaigns, fashion models, like Sinbad, are constantly on the move from one place to another. And although their adventures are certainly not always glamorous and exciting, it is still quite common for models to narrate recollections to emphasize the riches and wonders encountered as they move from one assignment to the next. Model MJ’s anecdote about her experience in the Middle East is representative. She exclaims:

“They do your make-up, your nails. They make you fly everywhere. I was in Istanbul last October; I spent I don’t know how many hours to do one photo this tiny to stick on a bottle of shampoo. It’s ridiculous! They brought a girl from Montreal just for that, and I left two days after the shooting. That’s glamour. Who’s going to Istanbul for such a short time except businessmenn? It’s great. And I never received a gift before, but you see this ring? I got it in Dubai after a job. I had just mentioned that I found it beautiful, and they gave it to me.”

MJ (model, 22)

Yet among those who have spent time as models, the enchantment of dwelling within the model world shows signs of being dispelled. The lifestyle that is so glamorous is also exhausting. And the long episodes of boredom that frame peaks moments of excitement become more salient as the models become more accustomed to the life. Yet the draw of the idealized lifestyle remains. Indeed, it is so strong that one informant suggests “it’s like an addiction you know. You can’t really quit” (Model H, 28). Model MP’s next story clearly exemplifies this tension:

“Weaning yourself off this whole game, this model job, is real tough. Because you see, you travel all over the place, you make plenty, you meet some pretty fascinating characters. And it’s fun to be with other girls who share the same kind of life. But afterwards...you’ve lived such a fast life that you say: “OK I’m going back home” and “OK I stop everything”... after a couple of weeks, you go crazy. You say to yourself: “My God, what did I do?” You know, the jet-set here...what is it? Wearing dark glasses in bars? No thanks. Over there, you have another top model sitting over there, and then Rod Stewart comes to say hello, followed by the singers from Oasis...See, it’s really exciting, and lots of fun. But when you find yourself back home, you begin to fret. I went through a period of depression; I felt so disoriented. But I felt disoriented because I had been disoriented for the last ten years. I didn’t know where I was going because I was all over the place. That’s why I had so much trouble getting adjusted to reality, the reality of my friends here. To what reality is. Because the job of being a model isn’t real. You spend your life projecting an image. (...) So, it’s real tough to go back to a normal life.

And when you think about all this you say: “Wow, what a mess!” But then you realize that you were super lucky. I lived in more than twenty countries; I went five times around the world. You know, it’s terrific!” MP (model, 28 yrs old).

MP’s narrative about trying to sustain her model life while attempting to leave it behind at the same time is evocative of another “One Thousand and One nights” tale: Ali Baba and the forty thieves. In this tale, Ali Baba, who has discovered the magic words—Open, Sesame—to open the thieves’ cave, lets his brother Kasim know of his secret discovery. Though it begins with delight Kasim’s journey into the cave ends tragically as he forgets the magic words to get out and is killed by the thieves upon their return.

The personal narratives of models who first delight in and later find themselves trapped by their fascination with the model life echo in some ways Kasim’s failed attempt to escape the enthralling cavern.

Narratives of Departure from the Identity

“Either we’re burnt out, or we change career, or we get kids; anyway something happens” N (model, 36 yrs old)

For most if not all women, the model identity, however desirable it may have been or continue to be, is unsustainable. With regards to beauty for instance, it is not unusual for the models to discover that their appearance, which they were first told was exquisite, is all too quickly judged otherwise according to the industry’s demanding and ever-changing standards. What was yesterday’s “it” look is today outdated or flawed. And as models age and/or as their careers fail to progress, alternate cultural myths appear to capture the essence of their narratives of identity departure.

Alice in Wonderland

“I got disillusioned by the fashion world. It’s all smoke and mirrors, and in the end, for those who made it, it blew in their faces. It was all a mirage, all beyond your control.” MP (28 yrs old)

Not unlike Lewis Carroll’s Alice who falls down the rabbit hole and discovers that things that are thought to be “normal” and “real” can take unsettling new shapes and meanings, our informants find out that the modeling “wonderland” can also entail a version of reality that is markedly different from that outside the field. Like Alice who adapted to the rules of Wonderland and who quickly comes to regard things she once took for granted as “dull and stupid” (Carroll: 10), models also abandon, for a time, their old understandings and adopt those that prevail in the modeling field. Their goals and dreams come to reflect what the industry regards as appropriate and worthwhile. Model H, for instance, tells us that though she initially thought merely being a model of any kind would be a dream come true, her acclimatization to the fashion industry has led her to view most of the modeling contracts she has attained as inferior. The industry dictates that only editorial work is prestigious, and H, having failed to win coveted editorial work on the cover of a magazine, experiences a sense that her identity has never been and never will be wholly achieved

“My only dream was to do one big cover. This is what I wanted to do. In my head, if I was not doing that, I was not a success. So once, for X magazine they were hesitating between me and a girl from another agency. My hair is very straight and this girl was a red head as well but she had curly hair and that’s what the editor wanted. So, I think that’s why I lost it.”
Interviewer: So, for you success would have been to do a cover?

Yeah! I forgot to mention that (nervous laugh). I think I did not want to think about it too much. It was really disappointing. My boyfriend would tell me: “well, it’s not because you don’t do a cover that you’re not successful and everything” but in modelling you know, if you’re not on the cover and in magazines well, you’re not very successful. Because the more magazines you do, the more runways you do, everything is connected. So for me, it was a failure even if I did many conventions and runways and everything, it was still my goal. So I came close but I did not get it.” H (model, 28 yrs old)

Model H’s story can be likened to Alice’s in that she too appears to find the standards and norms of her old life less valid than those of the model life into which she has fallen. And like Alice, H’s adventure ends with an awakening that places her outside the world of wonder briefly visited. One narrative of identity departure, then, looks backwards wistfully at the institutional setting in which the lost identity is embedded. Its norms and assumptions, however punishing, continue to be honoured. The process of giving up the treasured identity is almost like a fall from grace. A sense of failure haunts this narrative, as the individual comes to believe she never really achieved the idealized identity. Those whose narratives convey the modeling industry’s standards as valid exit the identity by regarding themselves failed aspirants within the field.

Legally Blonde

An alternative narrative in our data echoes the story of Elle Woods, heroine of the comedy “Legally Blonde.” In the story, a stereotypical California sorority girl decides to put her “frivolous” lifestyle behind her and to become a Harvard Law student. Elle’s original goal is to win back her boyfriend. However, in the process of her journey, Elle discovers new goals and gains new insights on what will make her happy. While continuing to look good, and to honour her old friends and her old ways, she comes to value, and to be valued for, more than good looks.

Certain models’ narratives accept that while the standards and norms of the modeling industry are valid, there are other equally valid fields with equally valid standards and norms. They regard their decision to exit the modeling world as a sensible choice to select a new identity that provides a better fit and/or a greater sense of fulfillment. For instance, model MJ’s desire to pursue a more “intellectual” identity is reflected in the next passage:

“School is really where I feel appreciated. When I did modelling full time, I felt empty. My days weren’t filled. You go to auditions, but the rest of the time… In Paris you might have castings which last all day; you’re busy and you can work a lot, but you need a lot of discipline to say to yourself….my mind must keep working. I would read books, the only alternative I had. Therefore, that’s what a model’s life is like: either you take it as it is, or else…” MJ (model, 28 yrs old)

As this passage indicates, MJ comes to regard herself as better suited to an intellectual identity than to a modeling identity. She recounts that when she was modelling full time she had “an inferiority complex,” relative to those who were more educated, though like many other models, she rejects the stereotype of models as stupid coat hangers. This narrative does not denigrate the original identity quest so much as it makes room for a new and equally valid one that simply suits the individual more completely.

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Disparate (perhaps Desperate) Housewives

“One of our girls left us in the dark for over four months after we had sent her to Italy. She finally sent us an email saying she had met this Greek guy and that she was now in Greece and three months pregnant! That’s how she decided to end her career. Lots of those girls are insecure and don’t know what’s going to happen with their career….There is a lot of insecurity, they wonder what they’re going to do in five years from now….and if they haven’t saved some money, they’re broke. Lots of them spend every penny they have so, when they meet some guy who tells them how great they are, they pair up and that’s the end of it. It happens quite often.” C (model turned agent, 30 yrs old)

The final narrative of our analysis can be loosely linked to the American television hit series “Desperate Housewives” which depicts the domestic lives and salacious secrets of five suburban women. The character of particular relevance here is Gabrielle Solis, an ex-model from New York who married her husband for money. As mentioned in the excerpt above, it is not unusual for models to turn to the domestic sphere as an alternative identity project. In our data for instance, two women have chosen to embrace motherhood.

Unlike the Gabrielle Solis character, however, the narratives of the models who turn to motherhood as an alternative identity project are not tales of desperation so much as of redemption. Those who told us of their journey away from the model identity and toward the mother identity emphasized that that they were being redeemed by moving away from fixation on their original identity quest. In the next passage, A, a model turned full-time mother, discusses how going through miscarriages and a conclusive pregnancy contributed to her reconsideration of the nature of the model identity:

“I should say that I had three miscarriages before I had my child, so I was pregnant four times in two years. And, naturally, I was a few pounds overweight due to my miscarriages. I never had to watch my weight because I was rather on the slim side, in a natural way. So, when I started looking at my body, comparing myself with others, well I had never done any of this, I said to myself: “My God!”, and people will pay to see THIS…So I was embarrassed and I felt like telling the client: “I’ll give you a discount.” I didn’t feel attractive…you always have to look sharp; I was never the most attractive, but I always did my best. I always knew what the client expected of me, but at that moment I didn’t. I didn’t feel right asking such a large fee, so I finished my job, and the next day I called my agent and told her: “I’m through.” I did a lot less lingerie and bathing suits. I was what, 34, maybe 35? I had made a living advertising bathing suits and lingerie for the past twelve years, but I was pregnant now, so I decided to call it quits. I didn’t want people to see me wearing lingerie any more. It had never bothered me before, but I just couldn’t do it any longer. It all happened within 24 hours. I said: “No, that’s it!” A lot of girls would have said: “Wait a minute, this is a well paying job.” The client hadn’t noticed a thing…But my conscience wouldn’t allow it. The next day I quit, and I never touched a bathing suit, or lingerie, after that, ever.” A (model, 40 yrs old)

This passage nicely conveys how A continues to buy into the norms and standards of the modeling industry (after her miscarriages, she feels too unattractive to charge her full fee) and how she repositions and partially denigrates those norms and standards.
relative to another identity project, motherhood. Of particular interest in A’s story is the allusion to her conscience as a reason not to pose in undergarments anymore and consequently, to restrict significantly her opportunity to maintain her model identity. This not only reinforces how sacred and venerated is the maternal ideal. It also highlights the relatively secular and debased associations that can be tagged with the model identity by those in transit away from it. In general, this narrative of identity abandonment denigrates the identity that is being left behind in comparison with the one that is being adopted. Note however, that as in the case of Gabrielle Solis, models who draw on this narrative to come to terms with their diminishing engagement with the model identity do not fully reject it. Rather, they reposition it as something less “good” (morally) or less “real” than their new identity project. In essence, this new identity project absolves them from any taint or tarnish associated with the identity they are gradually moving away from.

DISCUSSION

To be sure, the experiences of individuals pursuing, consuming, and abandoning other identity projects are unlikely to be informed by the same set of cultural narratives identified in the context of modeling. The general theoretical insight arising from this analysis suggests that just as cultural ideologies shape the identities that are desirable to and sought out by consumers (Thompson and Tambyah 1999), cultural narratives may frame their experiences of striving for, abiding within, and leaving or losing an identity. Cultural narratives, though not explicitly evoked by consumers, may tacitly help them make sense of their experiences.

In particular, when a cherished identity must be relinquished, cultural narratives, tacit though their influence may be, can help individuals cope with the experience of failure or loss. Narratives of identity departure vary in the extent to which the central character is portrayed as being in control versus out of control, and in which the journey from one reality to another is viewed as a loss or a gain. Each, however, acknowledges the instability of identity states thus enabling the consumer to see their identity journey as part of a common human experience.

This interpretation is akin to Swidler’s (1986) “culture as tool kit” notion: choosing useful elements—symbols, stories, rituals, and world-views or strategies when they fit particular needs or circumstances. Culture, in this way, helps people organize their actions; Swidler argues that people rely on different elements of culture as the need arises. Not all parts of culture are consistent with each other; indeed some elements contradict others but individuals deploy those that are useful at particular moments. Swidler also argues that people are most likely to employ their cultural tool kit when they are at points of transition, when their lives are unsettled.

The different cultural narratives that imbued the models’ narratives at transitional episodes in the process of abandoning their cherished but unsustainable identity project echoes Swidler’s argument. Although not necessarily evoked, the story lines of the widely shared tales ultimately influence how disenchanted models organize their current and past lived experiences as well as the construction of their future plans and desires.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This being said, we recognize that our endeavor into the topic of identity abandonment only scratches the surface of the phenomenon. A deeper engagement with the theories in social psychology that inform the understanding of the processes of coping with disappointment and especially, of causal attribution of control, i.e. framing one’s experience in terms of agency versus faith for instance, would most likely be of relevance and necessity to consumer researchers. Our limited objective in this paper was to engage with this untapped area of consumer identity via an analysis of the cultural narratives that were found to be quite resonant and omnipresent in our data.

To conclude, future research would benefit from a wider exploration of other relevant arenas such as the worlds of arts and competitive sports for instance, in order to identify new localized narratives as well as uncovering other potential intricacies of the identity abandonment process. Finally, an important avenue for research would be to undertake a longitudinal investigation of consumers’ disengagement from an unsustainable identity. The lack of longitudinal data in the present study notwithstanding, we have provided a preliminary analysis of consumers’ narratives escapes that will hopefully launch further inquiries that provide a deeper understanding of this common element of consumers’ experiences.

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Revisiting Emulation: An Empirical Illustration of Status Aspirational Approaches
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ABSTRACT

We illustrate that the theory of emulation is neither outdated, nor exploited—yet misunderstood, and identify nuances of emulative approaches on the level of social relations and show how they are structured according to dimensions of orientation and imitated authorities. By distinguishing between material style diffusion and emulative motives we show that material objects may move any direction whilst emulative motives always are directed upwards. Hence, consumers’ different emulative approaches may move material style from one unexpected group to another, but the motive is bound to the quest for a comfortable position in the universe of over-lapping status games.

“Oh if my uncle could see me now
If he could see how many rappers wanna be me now
Straight emulating my style”
(Nelly, “#1” 2002)

It must in practise seem somewhat bizarre that many social and cultural theorists claim that status aspirational imitation no longer exists. Especially in the light of today’s “bling-bling” culture, the embodiment of the same through TV shows like “MTV Cribs” and the proliferation of luxurious brands such as Gucci and Louis Vuitton. Still, the last forty years of consumer research have been characterized by an increasing celebration of the individual, seeing her as a self-made “project” with an emancipatory sovereignty to pick and choose what she desires—maybe more importantly reject what she doesn’t desire—from the perpetual offerings of styles and goods around her (Baudrillard [1970]1998; Brown 1993; Featherstone 1991; Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Hassan 1985; Jameson 1991; Sherry 1991). Alas, this celebration of individual power has fuelled the rejection of style diffusion explanations leaning on status aspirational imitation, despite constant everyday evidence of exactly that.

The most renowned theory on style diffusion as a result of status-aspirations, in consumer research, is the classical emulation theory. Since Veblen presented his theory on conspicuous consumption as conspicuous waste in 1899—and did so by explaining it with the emulative motive—emulation has attracted innumerable connotations followed by increased criticism along the way. Today the emulation theory owns the unflattering capability of generating, relatively speaking, academic consensus, namely on it’s relative inaccuracy. However, much of the criticism directed at the emulation theory is based upon historically accumulated connotations that in turn rest upon dubious and even erroneous assumptions. For any scholar who freshly joins the field of consumer research today, the multi-layered critique against emulation will be conceptually confusing. Due to the accumulated connotations and assumptions behind this critique, the theory of emulation is therefore many times rejected all too hastily. Recently scholars within marketing and consumer research (Chaudhuri and Majumdar 2006) have tried to recapitulate Veblen’s consumption theory according to contemporary ideological structures, but the focus has been, as often is the case, on the output concept ‘conspicuous consumption’ instead of on the motives behind emulation.

Our analysis of the theoretical foundations of emulation theory shows that the concept has been discharged too hastily and without proper argumentation. We therefore propose that the concept be dusted off and again brought into the warmth of contemporary consumer research. In support of this argument, we show results from a multi-sited empirical investigation into the field of home aesthetics where emulation theory indeed provides ample explanatory value.

REVISITING CLASSICAL EMULATION THEORY

We will start this section by briskly going through the central theses behind the emulation theory. We then thematize and critically discuss the critique and assumptions made in central consumer research literature regarding emulation and thereby approach the theory more in detail. The next section contains an empirical illustration of status aspiration approaches explained by emulation theory.

Early emulation theory: Veblen and Simmel. The theory of emulation dates back to the end of the 19th century and Thorstein Veblen’s seminal work The theory of the leisure class (Veblen [1899]1994). In this critical work Veblen introduced the central notions of conspicuous consumption, the law of conspicuous waste, and the emulative motive. Veblen ironically bantered the new capitalist classes for their conspicuous lifestyles in terms of pecuniary wealth shown through consumer goods, and compared them to the Victorian upper classes whose pecuniary wealth would be manifested through conspicuous leisure time. All as a result of the emulative process which is characterized by the fact that a class, lower in relation to another, will always emulate its superiors. As an explanation for the law of conspicuous waste, and for emulation per se, Veblen brought forward the emulative motive and presented it not only as the motor of all consumption increase, but also as the co-creator of social structure of which itself is encouraged. Campbell (1995) concludes Veblens emulative motives as: (1) the protection and enhancement of self-esteem, which is accorded by others, (2) the satisfaction and gratification coming from possessing something more than others, and (3) the desire to gain envy from one’s fellow-men.

Veblen actually saw the emulative motive as the strongest motive of all apart from self-preservation, and thereby underlined its structural significance. He meant that any surplus of goods which the community’s produces would be absorbed by the need for conspicuous waste as soon as provision for the most elementary physical wants had been secured. That is, social status would, through the emulative motive, be the major structure behind consumption:

The motive that lies at the root of ownership is emulation; and the same motive of emulation continues active in the further development of the institution to which it has given rise and in the development of all those features of the social structure which this institution of ownership touches.
(Veblen [1899]1994:17)

If Veblen was the first to focus on conceptualizing emulation, Georg Simmel went further in trying to explain the socio-psychological forces behind the emulative imitation described by Veblen. Simmel ([1904] 1957) explained the social processes of emulation in general and fashion in particular. He claimed that two antagonistic forces, which mutually limit each other, influence the individual and the public minds: the tendencies of generalization and special-
vation, or in other terms of expression: adaptation and differentiation. The former “gives rest to the soul” (p.542) whereas the latter permits a freedom to “move from example to example” (p.542). This dualism is according to Simmel represented socially through social adaptation and differentiation where fashion satisfies both those needs through imitation and demarcation. Imitation works in favour of social adaptation, transfers responsibility of choice onto others, and is therefore in a sense passive. The tendency of demarcation on the other hand is satisfied both through a constant change of content, and not the least through the division between social classes.

Simmel argued that fashion always differs between the social classes, and that the upper stratum abandons its fashions as soon as the lower stratum prepares to appropriate them. The reason for why the lower classes strive upwards is according to Simmel due to the social struggle for resources and privileges society hands the upper classes but deny the lower. Thus, the reason why the lower classes imitate the upper-classes is because envy creates, according to Simmel, a relationship between the one who envies and the person being envied. A relationship assuming some kind of unification, although in this case asymmetrical in its appropriation.

Because style and fashion are aspects of the external life, they are according to Simmel what the lower classes can imitate, as opposed to more subtle consumer practises which are impossible or very hard to imitate (compare Bourdieu, ([1979] 1984)). Therefore, according to Simmel, as wealth increases in the world, the process of change in styles and fashions will speed up further- and hence, emulation too:

Changes in fashion reflect the dullness of nervous impulses: the more nervous the age, the more rapidly its fashion change, simply because the desire for differentiation, one of the most important elements of fashion, goes hand in hand with the weakening of nervous energy. This fact in itself is one of the reasons why the real seat of fashion is found among the upper classes” (Simmel, 1904[1957]; p.547)

**CRITIQUE OF EMULATION**

Most of the critique against Veblen’s and Simmel’s emulation theories include rejections based on their historical bias. We have, based on a literature review, thematized this critique based on the erroneous assumptions behind these rejections and discuss them under the headings assumed stratification and erroneous materialization.

**Assumed stratification.** Modernity is commonly seen as a condition where the traditional social order, characterized by a purely economic organization, has loosened up and introduced new cultural, social and political patterns, in which individual achievement has replaced the “cosmological”, social order where status was ascribed at birth (Giddens 1990; Slater and Tonkiss 2001). The most common assumption among emulation critics is that emulation must rest upon such traditional rigid structures (Douglas 1996; Douglas and Isherwood 1980; McCracken 1988b). When these structures no longer exist, neither does emulation. However, the terms used by Simmel and Veblen to distinguish between dominant and dominated groups in society, can easily be seen as metaphors for relative positions in any experienced hierarchy, fluid or static. As the term hierarchy, like emulation, is burdened by ‘social class’ connotations, it is a strenuous task to use it in an argument meant to clean emulation from its static associations. However, a hierarchy has generically nothing to do with social classes and says nothing about the criteria for why someone is above, next to, or under someone else. The units of the hierarchy can be anything from individuals, tribes, groups, communities, families, households, couples, to social or cultural strata such as ‘classes’. A hierarchy only suggests that according to one or another criteria, stable or not, at one specific moment, there is one unit in a more dominant position relative another. That’s how static a hierarchy must be to be a hierarchy; hence, not static at all.

**Erroneous Materialization.** A recurrent assumption regarding emulation theory is that one can study a material style and reject emulation if this style has not followed a “top-down” direction in terms of the specific status hierarchy at hand. Typically, the few studies that empirically have been able to show examples of higher status groups adopting styles from lower status groups, and not the other way around, have also mistaken this as a falsification of the emulation theory. Jensen (1999) argues that Lipovetsky’s (1994) ‘marginal differentiation’ has become ‘absolute differentiation’ so that linear diffusion processes no longer are at work; grassroots styles don’t imitate anything but are created to oppose the dominant styles. Therefore processes of “trickle-up” and “trickle-across” instead of “trickle-down” direction are said to be more adherent in today’s un-linear fashion system. In support of this, there are a few studies by Postrel (2003), Rocamora (2002), Jensen (1999), Lipovetsky (1994), McCracken’s (1988b), and Hedige (1979), who all cross-reference each other in support of their argument and essentially rest on King’s (1963) in order to get support for the trickle-across process. But besides these few studies, none or little empirical work has been brought out to further explore consumer motives behind style adoption.

What these critics argue, is that simultaneously with the dissolution of social classes, society has gone through a dematerialization, which has led to, and itself is a product of, the arbitrary diffusion of styles. In other words, dematerialization has emerged in favour for consumption of taste where one no longer can detect on a person’s material style (i.e. in dress or home decoration style) what social class that person belongs to (Pakulski and Waters 1996; Shipman 2004). This is of course a tricky argument as the mere fact of social classes having more or less dissolved would theoretically be enough for the non-existence of differences in styles. But more importantly does this critique confuse its object of critique with its own unit of analysis. If dematerialization is what has happened then why study material styles? Even if the material styles seem arbitrarily diffused, there may very well be a pattern of underlying motive which is much more stratification-depending than it looks on the surface. Alas, what should be studied, and this was already acclaimed by Veblen, is the motive behind the imitative “choices”, rather than the actual style imitated. By studying the emulative motive, instead of the material style, one can see that people often imitate styles from one group in order to enhance their status in another group. Thus, they have imitated an external source to impress someone in their internal status game. Is this not emulation? In fact, status has been competed for by means of imitation of style- if so vicariously.

The rest of this paper is devoted to the results of an empirical study of consumer discourses on home aesthetics. The aim is to identify nuances of consumers’ emulative practices, and investigate their relation to structural considerations, in order to illustrate how emulation theory still provides ample explanatory power in understanding consumers’ motivations.

**METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This study takes its methodological departure in the field of Consumer Culture Theory (Arnould and Thompson 2005) in which the existential phenomenological view (Thompson 1997; Thomp-
son et al. 1989) is often used as a philosophical departure. The existential phenomenological approach is presented as “a paradigm for studying consumer experience” (Thompson et al. 1989, p.133) and carries both philosophical meanings and methodological implications. Furthermore, its conception of understanding refers to the “hermeneutical circle” (Thompson, Locander and Pollio 1994) and the iterative process in which meanings are derived from first persons’ descriptions of experiences.

An essential part of the methodology is to structure consumers’ consumption stories in relation to their particular life-themes and life-projects (Mick and Buhl 1992). This contextualization of the participants’ consumption provides more interpretive depth than merely asking for a list of social facts such as gender, age, income, and occupation. To arrive at a consumer near discourse of actual consumption practices, the interviews were characterized by a conversational style in which the participants talked freely. This research approach requires long relatively un-structured interviews in which the respondents are encouraged to tell stories from their past and present. The focus of the interviews was to gain an understanding of the participant’s consumption practices within home aesthetics, and thereby to seek insights into particular motives and choices concerning possible emulation. To structure the dialogue, and make sure that the same overriding themes were covered during the different interviews, a template was used with different topics (such as childhood home, home-styling, status, taste) around which the conversation during the interview revolved, although in as unobtrusive a manner as possible (McCracken 1988a).

Interviews were conducted in two different locations in order to capture the global flow of authoritative cultural meanings and how they co-exist with different local variations. This type of multi-sited ethnographic approach is conceptually introduced and described by Marcus as an alternative research mode to the traditional, single-sited, ethnographic approach. In this globalized view, the world is seen as a complex system, in which global flows instead of local situations must be the sites for investigation. Kjeldgaard et al. (forthcoming 2007) further sees this approach as an alternative to the modernistic “cross-cultural” approach in which static views on nation states and their inhabitants have dominated decisions on research scopes and sites. In the multi-sited approach one must follow cultural phenomena, metaphors, things, conflicts, people or biographies as were they flows of globalization in line with Arjun Appadurai’s (1990) seminal definition of globalization.

An underlying assumption during the interviews is that discourses of modernity are one dominant theme guiding consumers in their consumption of home aesthetics. In order to capture the global flows of such discourses, two urban settings were chosen on basis of their highly different socio-historical and cultural contexts. Philadelphia—in the neo-liberal, hyper-modern, and Western United States with its relatively short history—as one, and Istanbul—In the Muslim, albeit officially secular, country of Turkey with its long dynamic history of Byzantines fighting the Muslims, the Ottoman Empire, and Atatürk’s creation of the “Western” Turkish republic in the 1920’s—as the other.

The sample of respondents in both Philadelphia and Istanbul was generated a couple of months beforehand by asking local contacts to look for consumers willing to do a long interview about home aesthetics in the relative privacy of their home. Among the 20 proposed respondents in Philadelphia and 22 proposed in Istanbul, we strategically chose 11 respondents in Philadelphia and 14 respondents in Istanbul for final interviews. The choice was based on an objective to come home with at least 7-9 “good” interviews from each site, as suggested by McCracken (1988a). The other basis for choice of respondents was that they should vary in the typical social categories of living-area, background, age, gender, income and profession, but still belong to a larger, global “middle class” (see i.e. Woodward 2003). This refers to an approximate average of symbolic capital in general and cultural capital in particular as operationalized by Bourdieu ([1979] 1984) and Holt (1998).

**EMULATIVE APPROACHES**

In this section we give empirical examples of how emulation theory pertinently explains consumers’ discursive representations of their consumption practices in the domain of home aesthetics.

To structure our analysis we use the figure below, where we structure different nuances of consumers’ emulative approaches. The concept of emulative approaches differs from what Veblen and Campbell call “emulative motives”. The latter refers to motives for the existence of emulation *per se*. Our starting point is that this overall motive for emulation is valid; that consumers are always trying to consume in a manner that enhances their status, consciously or unconsciously. But it is not enough to say that consumers are trying to achieve higher status, as this is too vague a description, and on the highest abstraction level valid for all. In addition, in contemporary consumer society there are simply too many multiple status hierarchies simultaneously influencing consumers to allow for such a univocal description of all extant complexities. Hence, what we aim to add to the emulation theory is a *social relational level* with nuances of emulative approaches.

That is, particular approaches consumers use in terms of social relations when they emulate. Hence, we look at how participants approach their consumption universe, by looking at what force that predominantly governs their social worldview, in relation to their choice of material style authorities. These dimensions emerged during the analysis of the data and are used to place the individuals’ discursive representations along a continuum according to the axes in the figure. The labels on the axes are not mutually exclusive dichotomies but merely continuaus used in mapping consumers in relation to each other.

The vertical dimension, avoidance oriented versus unification oriented, refers to the two antagonistic forces which Simmel ([1904] 1957), in his theory on emulation, claims that we are continuously drawn and pulled between. According to Simmel both these traits are always simultaneously present in an individual but one or the other might have a stronger presence either permanently or at a particular point of time. The horizontal dimension, proximal authorities versus distant authorities, refers to whom the respondent chooses to imitate in order to consume in a manner that allows for either avoidance or unification. The horizontal dimension is thus subordinate to the vertical dimension. First and foremost, a consumer has a general direction towards being avoidance oriented or unification oriented. In order to turn this general direction into practice, some type of style authorities are always used and these might be distant or proximal. The distant authorities might include representations from film, literature or popular culture and the proximal authorities include individuals or groups in one’s direct physical environment that one thereby comes in actual contact with like kin, neighbors or other acquaintances.

It became apparent during the analysis that the above distinction between forces of avoidance and unification on one hand, and proximal and distant authorities on the other, had to be made. The former is a whole orientation in how a consumer classifies the world and henceforth her taste (not much different from Bourdieu’s *habitus*), in terms of whether she foremost defines that universe in terms of what she *is* or what she *is not*. In contrast, the dimension of authorities refers to the *actual materialized imitation*. That is, a
distinction is made between unification, which takes place on a level of classification, and imitation, which takes place on an embodied style level. Alas, one can be predominantly avoidance-oriented when classifying the universe, and still identify with and imitate certain style authorities. With this said, we see that there is always imitation, and demarcation is merely a result from avoidance-oriented imitation. Hence, an emulative approach:

In the following we will describe four ideal-types of emulative approaches on a level of social relations. The different ideal-types have been described in the figure by the general orientation towards emulation expressed by the participating consumers. While the analysis is inspired by the entire data set, the ideal-types are each exemplified by one consumer that we have chosen to represent the particular approach.

**Union by communitarianism.** Consumers who are unification oriented in their classification of the world and who ultimately imitate proximal authorities are directed towards communitarianism. By this we mean that they let the community they are in determine what style to imitate. They also express a strong bond with this community and through language make it clear that their main approach is to stay within a union of communitarian character. On a stratification level these consumers see themselves as part of a “gemeinschaft”-like formation and a more traditional sociality of inner-direction where people are drawn into roles “that make a socially acceptable contribution” (Riesman [1961] 2001). Due to this experience of a very traditional social order these consumers’ emulative approach is the one, relative the others in our study, that most strictly resembles the emulation advocated by Simmel and Veblen. In the example with Olcay, a 52-year-old Turkish woman in Istanbul, we see how there is an experienced, concrete pressure to live up to some ideal standard defined by others in social situations in general:

**FIGURE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emulative approaches</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AVOIDANCE ORIENTED</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEMARCATION BY LOCALISM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROXIMAL STYLE AUTHORITIES</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNION BY COMMUNITARIANISM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oclay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNION BY GLOBALISM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karolyn</td>
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<tr>
<td>DISTANT STYLE AUTHORITIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEMARCATION BY ESCAPISM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIFICATION ORIENTED</td>
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Oclay: There is the society. You’d be humiliated in your community. Your friends, your circle wouldn’t tolerate it [living with a partner you are not married to].

I: Does it mean they would treat you differently because your daughter lives with her boyfriend?

Oclay: Well, sure, they would mention it. You’d be bothered by their talking. They’d do everything with talks.

I: Well, OK, they’d talk et cetera but would they also exclude you from the community? Like punishing: “Oh no, your daughter does this, does that, let’s not meet her.”

Oclay: Well, not as much in a group of our class. But in a, let’s say, of lower income or a more low social level… I mean, we are a family of a good level in Turkey and Istanbul… Indeed, they would exclude.

Despite Oclay’s statement that social sanctions mostly take place in “lower social levels” than her own, she still admits to the social pressure created by the talk and gossip of her community. The same social pressure is present in Oclay’s community in terms of home furnishing. She refers to the explicitly lived pressure from
“the environment” and how that forces her and her family to consume in a manner expected of them by these proximal authorities in order to not be excluded from the community:

Olcay: For two or three years we have just that sofa in our salon, and nothing else, not this table etc., we were going to buy new furniture but we didn’t, I don’t know why, uh, we didn’t find anything to buy. We didn’t find anything good enough, we didn’t like anything so much to buy. Because when you buy furniture it will last 10 years or something, we don’t change the furniture so much, so we stayed like that for two or three years. And uh, after, uh, after that period, or in that period we had the pressure from the environment: “Why is it like that?”, “Why don’t you buy?”, “What is this?”. And so, things like that. And then we, uh, are forced to, and then we were forced to go and buy the furniture.

Olcay exhibits a unification oriented organization of taste. This implies that she predominantly describes her taste preferences in terms of what she wants to be, or what she has to be, instead of what she does not want to be like on a general level, but also on an aesthetic level as exemplified by the quote below:

Olcay: When I, when I were younger my uh, my friends, people around me would not be interested in my house they say “oh, okay, it’s a very, uh, comfortable sofa, and they won’t even realize that I have only one sofa in my salon but, uh, but people around me, around my age now, uh, when they come to my house and see a single sofa, or maybe other decorative items like this in the floor, and etcetera, it might be comfortable but they would say “what kind of a house is that, is it only a sofa, what is it? (M, 52, Turkey)

Here it is obvious that other cultural motives, such as comfort, are subordinate to the emulative motive.

Demarcation by localization. Consumers who are predominantly avoidance oriented and use proximal authorities to satisfy this orientation, express the most contradictive type of emulative approach in our investigation. It is contradictive in the sense that these consumers express a crystal clear wish to demarcate from what is familiar, but they are not independent or motivated enough to do this on their own. Instead, they find a local authority in their physical surrounding who can take the ultimate responsibility for the symbolic qualities of the style chosen:

Paul: John is always an influence on those things because he is always pushing those ideas on me...older items like the dish-ware being white...it was a specific demand he had...

I: Where do you think he gets his influence from?
Paul: Uhm...friends in England, I guess...but I’m not the one to talk about European things...but I think the white dish-ware is a classic French thing...and...I don’t know...I said England for some reason for the darker wood...I don’t even know if that is true at all...

I: But how come you associate the white with French?
Paul: That was because of John...he said that outright...the white plates were a French thing...like elegant plates and cups and things like that...the classic French thing... (M, 28, USA)

Still, consumers like Paul describe their tastes predominantly in opposition to “others” despite their identification with proximal authorities. How can this contradiction take place? An explanation for Paul’s approach could be Douglas Holt’s (1998) interpretation of Bourdieu’s theory on cultural capital. Paul is clearly driven by the provocation of the “anonymous mass”, but he does not possess sufficient cultural resources to materialize the wished demarcation on his own. He needs outside confirmation in terms of a role-model whom he finds in a present and concrete cultural authority. This way he can be sure he imitates the “correct” style, while simultaneously guaranteeing singularity in relation to the one’s he calls “everyone else”:

Paul: I am definitely going away from a modern look. The only exceptions are the two electronic appliances...it is truly deviating from that idea. I am definitely going away from a more typical home-look...not in a modern way just the opposite...more in an antique way [...] I am trying to associate with a more specific time period where they will be more commonly seen...because you do not run into these items in most people’s houses...these days...which is part of the reason I got them in the first place...I did not want the same items everyone else had purchased at the same store...” (M, 28, USA)

The moral connotations we draw from Paul seeing himself as different from “typical” people, indicate that Paul experiences himself in some status hierarchy that he otherwise does not readily specify.

Unification by globalization. Those who are unification oriented and draw inspiration from distant authorities seek a unification on a level which we describe as globalization. The notion of globalization works on two levels. On the authority level, the contemporary mass-medial world is represented by globally broadcasted home furnishing shows, interior style magazines, etcetera. On the level of unification, it represents an imagined mass of global citizens. In literature on contemporary society, the anonymization of “the Other” is said to be a central theme in the globalization of late modernity or postmodernity (Giddens 1990). In this view, more and more contact and identification is made with secondary, instead of with primary, groups. Such “global identification” should be prevalent amongst all consumers of our times according to the postmodern literature (Baudrillard 1995; Featherstone 1991). This is not necessarily always the case as we have seen in previous sections where consumers compare themselves with concrete and proximal cultural authorities. Many respondents, however, reveal a strong identification with what is going on outside their primary environment. Primarily by drawing inspiration from, the mediascapes described by Appadurai (1990):

Karolyn: HDTV is a cable station here that does a lot of home remodeling. I started watching HDTV over the Christmas holiday, since the Christmas holidays I’ve painted my living room, my dining room, had my hard-wood floors re-finished, painted my, uh, bedroom… and, uh, I think that’s pretty much it. Oh (!), and the living room set, [I] moved my living room set to the basement, in what (?) the last three months.

I: Because of something they said there?
Karolyn: Just seeing, getting new ideas and flavor, I had the guidance to different paint colors, and contrasting
Karolyn is very actively trying to emulate the style proposed by the style authorities of the HDTV. She thereby does not partake in the interpretive acts of “naturalizing, problematizing, juxtaposing, and transforming” countervailing cultural meanings described by Thompson and Haytko (Thompson: 37). Instead she is willing, in a rather unreflective manner, to buy into the style dictated by these authorities. The driving force behind Karolyn’s emulation—unification—is directed towards an imagined global standard of “contemporary” [her own term] living. The potential stigma of unifying with the pop cultural massification of society proposed already by Theodor Adorno (Adorno) does not seem to worry these consumers. Rather, there is a pride in being a “global citizen” (Holt 2004) where being “up-to-date” according to global standards is the same as being ahead in a status hierarchy defined by mass fashion.

Demarcation by Escapism. The last type of emulation is when a consumer is avoidance oriented and imitates distant authorities. Many of these consumers exhibited a strong urge to escape the homogeneous standardization effects connoted by modernity. These consumers instead identified with fictive cultural authorities of taste, hand picked to contrast with the masses. In this way the consumers instead identified with fictive cultural authorities of Many of these consumers exhibited a strong urge to escape the aspiration, and a status corrector, in terms of its a status strategy, in terms of the upper-class aspiration, and a status corrector, in terms of its “homey” style (McCracken 1989):

Brenda: Oh... I really like early poverty, I like that expression, I would like to say early Victorian poverty. I feel as though every house in which I have ever lived has always appeared to be clearly a British men’s club. Because being married I always thought it was grossly unfair to force the man to live with floral everything […]

I: What kind of inspiration did you have then, what images and books or magazines or... history books, what inspired you to create that certain style? Where have you gotten that certain inspiration from?

Brenda: I’m going straight back to that movie Mary Poppins, because palm trees, zebra skins on the floor, to me and... Books! Overall books! (F, 43, USA)

Brenda draw inspiration from the style of “early Victorian poverty” that she sees as a quaint marker of a connection with the past. Even further away from the harsh, and perhaps boring, reality of everyday domestic life, she draws inspiration from Mary Poppins, a fictional character living in a fantasy world. Judging by the fact that her and her family live on incomes under poverty level, it is clear that she in no ways truly embodies a voluntary simplistic lifestyle. Despite her scarce economy, she refuses to give up her standards of “good taste”:

I: What about your own home? Have you spent a lot of money on your furniture?

Brenda: No, I haven’t and that’s only because I, I’ve always thought that was only because I’ve never had a lot of money for furniture, however: my philosophy for life is that poverty is no excuse for bad taste.

The below quote further shows how Brenda shies away from what she sees as common. It is clear that the significance of this commonness is not in the consumption objects per se but in how different style authorities use the objects and how they are thereby disseminated to the masses:

Brenda: [L.L. Bean is] an elitist, very preppy, let’s just call it “Kennedy family”-as-a-way-to-describe-it-uhm-catalogue. [L.L. Bean] branched out, they were not only selling clothes, they were also selling furniture and home décor. This fabric [the one we are sitting on] was all over the catalogue like a bad rash! You could order sofas, foot stools, chairs... little things for the bed room, pillows, and it was all in this fabric, so now of course it’s time for me to change my fabric

I: So now it’s famous?

Brenda: Yes, and now, even though I still like it, I certainly don’t want what everyone else has! (F, 43, USA)

Brenda’s use of the strong expressions “like a bad rash” to describe her fabric was vulgarized by L.L. Bean shows how strong her inclination towards avoidance is. In Brenda’s case, this inclination is so strong that she turns to purely fictional authorities, like Mary Poppins, to escape being connected to the vulgarities of mass taste. More importantly, with this avoidance approach she manages to emotionally escape from today’s reality and emulate style authorities from a distant time and place that holds a safe position in the upper parts of a rigid status hierarchy. Thereby she remains, in her imagination, untouched by “reality’s” economically driven status hierarchies within which she cannot compete.

**DISCUSSION**

In this paper we have illustrated that the theory of emulation is neither outdated, nor exploited—yet misunderstood. We have identified nuances of emulative approaches on the level of social relations and show how they are structured according to dimensions of orientation and imitated authorities. These findings suggest that emulation is a valid concept in explaining consumers’ consumption choices. A potential explanation for the previous rejection of emulation can be found in the controversy around the notion of “trickle down”, which is many times conceptually confused with emulation. In the “trickle down” conceptualization there has been a conflation between material style movement on one hand and emulative motives on the other. If a distinction instead is made between these dimensions, as we have done in this paper, it becomes apparent that material objects may move any direction whilst emulative motives always are directed upwards along subjectively experienced status ladders. Hence, consumers’ different emulative approaches may move material style from one unexpected group or strata of people to another, but the meta motive is eternally bound to the quest for a comfortable position in the universe of over-lapping status games.

Furthermore, these findings challenge the strands within consumer culture research that predominantly focus on consumer agency and individualist power (e.g. Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Thompson and Haytko 1997). The empirical examples given in the present paper suggest that consumers, despite a more fragmented and less rigidly structured society, contribute to reproducing more or less set status hierarchies through emulative practices. Although experienced subjectively, our participants clearly speak of assumed hierarchies as objectively structural and inevitable.
Finally, the multi-sited nature of the empirical study allowed us to see how global discourses of styles are disseminated to and interpreted in different locations. Especially wide-spread styles like “modernism” come to serve different roles as abstract distant style authorities depending on the local context. The previously localized status hierarchies are thereby challenged by increasing global influences for consumers where it is entirely possible to emulate styles that are both unusual and perhaps incomprehensible for the local crowd. Nevertheless, emulation it is.

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Are All Outgroups Created Equal? Consumer Identity and Dissociative Influence
Katherine White, University of Calgary, Canada
Darren W. Dahl, University of British Columbia, Canada

EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Past research has largely focused on positive reference groups (i.e., groups individuals wish to be associated with), identifying the central role they can play in determining attitudes and behaviors. Indeed, consumers often are influenced by members of their own group (e.g., Bearden and Etzel 1982; Moschis, 1976) and those they aspire to be like (Escalas and Bettman 2003). The current research focuses on a relatively under-examined type of group—the dissociative reference group—a group with which the individual wishes to avoid being associated and feels a sense of disidentification. The current research elucidates the role of dissociative reference group in determining consumer self-brand connections, evaluations, and choices.

Recently, Escalas and Bettman (2005) examined the differentiation between ingroups and outgroups as reference groups related to consumer self-brand connections. These researchers demonstrated that consumers have stronger self-brand connections to brands consistent with an ingroup than brands inconsistent with an ingroup, and weaker self-brand connections to brands consistent with an outgroup than brands inconsistent with an outgroup. These effects were more pronounced for brands that were relatively more symbolic (i.e., brands that communicated something to others about the user’s self-identity). Escalas and Bettman demonstrated an important point: Groups to which consumers do not belong can have implications for consumer self-brand connections. We extend this research by proposing that consumers are not always motivated to avoid outgroup memberships, and that it is dissociative reference groups in particular that will most strongly influence negative self-brand connections as well as consumer evaluations and choices.

We believe it is necessary to differentiate dissociative reference groups from outgroups more generally because while there are surely many outgroups that people are not concerned about (e.g., I am not a soccer player, but that group does not have motivational implications for me) and aspire to be members of (e.g., I am not a model, but I wish I were), dissociative groups are outgroups people are motivated to avoid being associated with (e.g., I am not a goth and I wish to avoid being associated with that group). Thus, we believe that, rather than examining outgroups more generally, it is more telling to examine the effects of specific types of outgroups.

Past research does not elucidate whether certain outgroups exert a greater influence on consumers than others. While Escalas and Bettman (2005) looked at outgroups more generally, White and Dahl (2006) have provided preliminary evidence that a specific type of outgroup—the dissociative reference group—can influence consumer evaluations and choices, in a context where self-presentation concerns are relevant. In particular, men avoided the dissociative associations of a product named the “ladies’ cut steak” when it was to be consumed in public and this tendency was heightened when the consumer was high in public self-consciousness. The goal of the current research is to clarify and extend the results of Escalas and Bettman (2005) and to integrate their findings with those of White and Dahl (2006).

In study 1, participants self-identified brands that were either associated with an ingroup, an outgroup, or a dissociative group. They reported their evaluations and self-brand connections towards these brands (along with neutral brands). Participants demonstrated the most negative self-brand connections and evaluations related to dissociative brands. Outgroups more generally, did not have as strong implications for negative self-brand connections and evaluations. In addition, we found that these dissociative effects were more pronounced when the brand was viewed as being more symbolic in nature (i.e., the brand communicated something about the consumer’s identity to others).

Because White and Dahl (2006) and study 1 suggest that the desire to present a particular image to others can motivate dissociative influence, in study 2 we wished to examine the role of the private self. Specifically, we tested whether salience of ingroup identity moderates dissociative influence. We predicted that dissociative influence would be most pronounced when the consumer’s ingroup identity is primed. We used Canadian identity as the ingroup and operationalized a dissociative identity as being American. Participants evaluated pens that were associated with groups that pretested as being dissociative (“American pen”), related to an outgroup more generally (“Belgian pen”), or neutral (“Vintage pen”). The results revealed that Canadians evaluated the dissociative option more negatively than the outgroup and neutral options, and this was only apparent when their own ingroup identity was primed.

In study 3 we examined the role of the private self in determining dissociative influence by examining the moderating role of ingroup identification. Participants were more likely to avoid choosing the dissociative option than a neutral option or an outgroup option, but only when they were high in ingroup identification. Further, these effects were mediated by a desire for private self-disidentification, but not by public self concerns.

Finally, in study 4 we examined the conditions under which dissociative influence does not occur. When situational constraints were weak consumers showed a tendency to evaluate the dissociative option more negatively than the outgroup option. When situational constraints were strong (i.e., there was social pressure to evaluate the dissociative option positively) consumers did not differentially evaluate the dissociative and outgroup options. Participants demonstrated somewhat more positive evaluations of the dissociative option when situational constraints were strong rather than weak.

Across four studies we demonstrate that dissociative reference groups have important implications for consumer self-brand connections, evaluations, and choices. Consumers showed a greater tendency to avoid products associated with dissociative reference groups than with outgroups more generally. When products were relatively non-symbolic in nature, participants only showed a tendency to avoid the dissociative product when their own ingroup identity was primed or when they were high in ingroup identification. Finally, participants did not exhibit dissociative influence when situational constraints were high. The implications of the research for theory and practice are discussed.

REFERENCES


**SESSION SUMMARY**

**Consumer Tribes: Prospects and Reflections**

Avi Shankar, University of Bath, UK  
Bernard Cova, France and Bocconi University, Italy  
Robert V. Kozinets, York University, Canada

In this conference, we examine and reflect on the future of consumer tribes. This session makes a big claim, that consumer tribes will become the new marketers of the 21st century, standing alongside traditional marketers. It sees them as the leading edge of a force that hopelessly obscures the production consumption divide. Consequently, this special session is dedicated to investigating their role in the marketplace not just as grouping of consumers but as collectives of prosumers. This is a major issue for consumer researchers and marketers who look at consumer agency and the way marketplace subcultures are performing and operating.

**ABSTRACTS**

"Consumers' Cultures' Prosumers' Passion"

*Robert V. Kozinets, York University, Canada*

In this presentation, the passion of creative collectivities of consumers is theoretically nested within a hierarchical system in which they differentiate themselves from the passive consumption of other members of the same collectivity, and of consumer culture cast in general terms. Consumer-aided content creation is now the order of the day, and this research examines collections of conspiring consumers who create and distribute actual mass culture, attempting to unpack why this occurs, how it is taking form, and what the implications are for scholars of consumer research and marketing.

"Community Made: From Consumer Resistance to Tribal Entrepreneurship"

*Bernard Cova, France & Bocconi University, Italy  
Daniele Dalli, Pisa University, Italy*

Thanks to the Internet, consumers are self-made, self-governing subjects, e.g. they are empowered consumer and more and more anti-marketers. Recent experiences have highlighted how hard it can be for some companies to interact with this type of empowered consumers gathered into tribes. Through the elaboration of immaterial labour made up of interpersonal communication and cultural creativity, consumer tribes are poised to become collective actors in the marketplace, much in the same way that companies already are. Communal elements and market forces interact with each other and, according to the characteristics of the socio-historical context, consumers either may succeed in controlling the value they produce, or they are partially exploited and the market takes control of that value.

"Sub-cultures and Consumer Tribes: Mapping Inter-Community Relations in Marketplace Cultures"

*Robin Canniford, University of Exeter, UK  
Avi Shankar, University of Bath, UK*

Current descriptions of community such as subcultures of consumption, brand communities, hyper communities, neotribes, and new social movements provide differing concepts of interpersonal relations in consumer cultural settings. In this paper we advance a process-oriented theory to address a series of gaps in these concepts, namely a sense of how different descriptions of culture relate to one another in time and in space. In particular we suggest that whilst disparate categories of community provide useful theoretical toolkits to describe social action, we lack a systematic understanding of how one form of community may have emerged from another form of community, or how two different communities may be involved in concurrent processes of negotiation and conflict. In order to address this problem we consider a historical-ethnographic study of market-place culture.
Understanding the Self-Prophecy Phenomenon
Andrew Perkins, Oregon State University-Cascades, USA
Ronn J. Smith, University of Arkansas, USA
David E. Sprott, Washington State University, USA
Eric R. Spangenberg, Washington State University, USA
David C. Knuff, Oregon State University-Cascades, USA

ABSTRACT

The self-prophecy effect suggests that asking people to predict whether or not they will perform a target action leads to increased probability of performing that action, often in a socially normative direction. In two experiments, competing theories of cognitive dissonance and social identity activation were explored. Experiment 1 revealed that, following an experimentally manipulated prediction request, subjects’ self-identity with a target behavior (recycling) and self-esteem increased relative to a control group. In Experiment 2, self-esteem was manipulated, followed by a prediction request. Results suggested that self-prophecy effects may be the result of the activation of normative social identities.

INTRODUCTION

When considering social influence strategies, self-prophecy is a simple technique in which merely asking someone to predict future behavior—typically regarding a socially normative action—increases the likelihood of performing the behavior. Sherman (Sherman 1980) demonstrated this phenomenon by increasing people’s willingness to donate time to a charity, decreasing willingness to sing to someone on the phone, and reducing the likelihood of writing a counterattitudinal essay. Since Sherman’s initial work, self-prophecy has been demonstrated for wide-ranging behaviors such as increasing voting (Greenwald, Bellezza, and Banaji 1988; Greenwald et al. 1987), reducing cheating (Spangenberg and Obermiller 1996), increasing attendance at a health club (Spangenberg 1997; Spangenberg et al. 2003), increasing recycling of aluminum cans (Sprott, Spangenberg, and Perkins 1999), reducing implicit gender stereotyping (Spangenberg and Greenwald 1999), choosing healthy snack options (Sprott, Spangenberg, and Fisher 2003), and committing to a health assessment (Sprott et al. 2004).

Prior self-prophecy research has shown that when the target behavior is socially desirable (e.g., recycling), the behavior change is upward; when the behavior is normatively undesirable (e.g., cheating, stereotyping), it is downward. Further, Sprott et al. (2003) demonstrated that the magnitude of a self-prophecy effect is moderated by the normative beliefs held toward a particular behavior. Although research has made apparent the nature of the self-prophecy effect, the theoretical underpinnings of self-prophecy are still unclear. Spangenberg and Greenwald (1999) suggest that cognitive dissonance is the most promising theoretical explanation for self-prophecy, with Spangenberg et al. (2003) providing the first theory test in support of a dissonance-based explanation. The current work seeks to develop and empirically verify the theoretical underpinnings of the self-prophecy effect.

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE AND SELF-PROPHECY

Cognitive dissonance is fundamentally motivational in nature, with an inconsistency among a person’s cognitions generating dissonance, which motivates the person to alleviate this dissonant psychological condition (Elliot and Devine 1994; Festinger 1957). The leading account driving the self-prophecy effect is Festinger’s (1957) cognitive dissonance (Spangenberg and Greenwald 1999; Spangenberg et al. 2003). In particular, the self-concept formulation of cognitive dissonance (Aronson and Carlsmith 1962) offers the most promising underlying explanation for dissonance evoked in self-prophecy. This view retains the initial idea of internal inconsistency as posed by Festinger, but focuses the scope to the inconsistency between the self-concept and behavior in that dissonance is created only if it pertains to one’s self-concept (Aronson 1968; Thibodeau and Aronson 1992). Holding this view, dissonance is a higher-level inconsistency between one’s belief that s/he is a good and moral person and behavior that contradicts that belief, rather than a lower-level inconsistency between one’s attitude and cognition about inconsistent behavior. The extent to which behavior is inconsistent with the self-concept predicts dissonance arousal.

A cognitive dissonance explanation for self-prophecy posits that when people are confronted with a prediction request, psychological discomfort arises due to people being made aware of a discrepancy between values they hold (e.g., normative beliefs about a behavior; including the belief that they are a good person and good people should perform the behavior) and how they have behaved in the past with regard to the behavior. Consider the socially positive behavior of recycling: Despite the level of previous behavior, when making a prediction request concerning recycling, an individual is reminded that he or she should recycle but neglects to recycle, or should recycle all the time but does so only occasionally. Discrepancy between these two cognitions causes cognitive dissonance, which may lead to action or behavior change (dissonance reduction) inline with the prediction request. Besides a change in behavior (e.g., increases in recycling) a person may undergo changes in psychological states. For example, after being reminded that recycling is a good (socially normative) behavior and realizing that s/he does not recycle, a person may alleviate dissonance by (1) decreasing their attitude toward recycling or (2) experiencing a degradation of self-esteem. In either case, action toward the focal task (recycling) is not present and a person maintains a cognitive balance through changes in their view of either recycling or self (Greenwald et al. 2002).

The findings of extant self-prophecy research suggest that a number of components important to dissonance are present at the time of a prediction request. First, in a typical self-prophecy intervention, control group subjects behave in a manner less socially desirable than those subjects completing a prediction request. In other words, in the absence of a prediction request, subjects behave at a level that is inconsistent with the normative belief. Second, a behavioral self-prediction likely reminds people of their behavioral transgressions regarding a social norm. Third, prior research indicates that people make a self-prediction in the direction of the social norm, which indicates an understanding of the norms associated with particular activities (Spangenberg and Greenwald 1999).

Spangenberg and Greenwald (1999) note that the self-prophecy paradigm parallels the dissonance-based research of induced-hypocrisy (Aronson, Fried, and Stone 1991; Fried and Aronson 1995; Stone et al. 1994). In this stream of research, hypocrisy is induced when subjects advocate a position beneficial to others through proattitudinal speeches or writing. This advocating is
followed by reminding the subjects of their past failure to act in a manner consistent with the advocacy. The juxtaposition of the advocacy and awareness of failure to perform the behavior arouses dissonance. Similarly, a self-prophecy prediction request reminds people of how they should behave and that they have not behaved in that manner. This results in dissonance which can be alleviated via a change in behavior (Spangenberg et al. 2003).

In summary, a self-prophecy prediction request makes people aware of a discrepancy between their actual and normatively ideal states regarding a focal behavior. This discrepancy produces a dissonant state that can be alleviated through subsequent action consistent with social norms (Spangenberg and Greenwald 1999; Spangenberg et al. 2003).

**NORMATIVE SOCIAL IDENTITY ACTIVATION AND SELF-PROPHECY**

In addition to a cognitive dissonance explanation for self-prophecy, there is empirical evidence suggesting the importance of social norms. Sprott, Spangenberg, and Fisher (2003) demonstrate that the effect of a self-prediction is greater when people hold stronger (versus weaker) social norms regarding a particular behavior. Although this finding can be considered consistent with a dissonance-based explanation for self-prophecy (i.e., greater cognitive dissonance is elicited for those with stronger social norms), it also suggests the importance of how closely one identifies with a social norm.

Social identities are self-definitions that incorporate more general and normative knowledge about a particular group that an individual belongs to or identifies with (Brewer 1991). An individual’s social identity has been found to influence a wide variety of consumer behaviors and attitudes (Briley and Wyer 2002; Deshpande, Hoyer, and Donthu 1986; Stayman and Deshpande 1989; Wooten 1995), spokesperson response (Deshpande and Stayman 1994), advertising response (Forehand and Deshpande 2001; Forehand, Deshpande, and Reed II 2002), media usage (Saegeret, Hoover, and Hilger 1985), and information processing tendencies (Meyers-Levy and Sternthal 1991). Social identities can be especially influential when that identity is made socially or environmentally salient (Briley and Wyer 2002; Forehand and Deshpande 2001; Forehand et al. 2002; Reed II 2004). Social identities are shaped by a lifetime of experience, social interaction, and self-expression (Berk 1988; Escalas and Bettman 2003, 2005; Fournier 1998; Richins 1994). Social identities are thought to incorporate behavioral and attitudinal information as well (Brewer and Gardner 1996), such that activating a social identity affects the individual’s self-esteem (Crocker et al. 1994). Thus, when a positive social identity is activated, it is expected that the individual’s own self-esteem should be affected in a positive direction as well. Further, to the extent that individuals use these social identities as indicators of behavior, it is expected that individual should attempt to behave in a way consistent with the activated social identity.

**THEORETICAL PREDICTIONS**

How might a cognitive dissonance explanation and a normative social identity activation explanation be delineated? When making a prediction, one must first activate information related to the behavior. Because the self-prophecy effect works with normative behavior, the definition of normative behavior suggests that most individuals should have that information associated with the self to some extent. Attitudes toward a behavior (e.g., recycling) should be relatively positive regardless of whether or not a self-prophecy prediction is made. This is because the behavior is both positive and normative. When one thinks about recycling, even if one is not making a prediction about performing the behavior, it should be expected that a positive attitude toward recycling would be present. Thus, cognitive dissonance and normative self-identity activation should predict a positive attitude toward recycling following the prediction, as well as the activation of information about the target normative behavior as it relates to that individual’s self- and social identities.

Where the two explanations differ is in their treatment of self-esteem. If self-prophecy is a dissonance-based effect, lower relative self-esteem should be observed for those who make a prediction regarding the normative behavior compared to a control group that does not make a prediction request. This drop in self-esteem is a result of the inconsistency in memory related to the positivity of the normative behavior (e.g., “I know that recycling is positive and I know that I have not recycled.”). On the other hand, if self-prophecy is the result of social identity activation, the opposite effect is expected related to self-esteem. If it is the case that making the self-prediction toward the normative behavior activates the “recycling” social identity, then one’s self-esteem should increase, as the recycling social identity is positive in nature. The link between social identity and self-esteem is well-researched in social psychology (Brewer and Gardner 1996; Brown 1998; Crocker et al. 1994; Greenwald et al. 2002; Greenwald et al. 1998). As such, to the extent that a particular self- or social identity is activated, the valence incorporated into that identity should be activated as well. Therefore, self-esteem should increase for those who make a self-prophecy prediction compared to those who do not make a prediction.

**EXPERIMENT 1**

Experiment 1 tests the hypothesis that making a self-prophecy prediction activates self-recycling identity in memory. To the extent that this self-recycling identity is activated, the positive affect associated with the normative behavior (recycling) should then lead to an increase in self-esteem. From a methodological standpoint, Experiment 1 was designed to ascertain whether the Implicit Association Test (Greenwald, McGhee, and Schwartz 1998) is an appropriate measure to capture these changes in cognitive activation. If activation of self-identity information is the impetus for behaving consistently with the normative behavior, then it is expected that self-relevant knowledge will be observed via the IAT.

**Sample and Procedure Overview.** The sample included seventy-six students from an introductory marketing course at a large west coast university participating for course credit. Subjects completed a set of self-report measures assessing their attitudes toward various normative behaviors. A distraction task followed completion of the questionnaire. Following the distraction task, subjects completed the self-prophecy manipulation task, then immediately completed three IATs: recycling identity, recycling attitude, and self-esteem. Following completion of the IATs, subjects were debriefed and released.

**Explicit Measures.** Subjects completed a battery of self-report measures designed to ascertain the extent to which subjects had a positive attitude toward various normative behaviors, including the target behavior of recycling. Following instructions that there were no right or wrong answers, and that the responses would be anonymous, subjects completed five six-item scales that measured attitudes toward six different target items, one of which was the target behavior (recycling). Different versions of these measures were counterbalanced to avoid order effects.

**Experimental Manipulation.** Following completion of the explicit measures and a distraction task designed to eliminate any
with this hypothesis, subjects who made a self-prophecy prediction revealed a significantly stronger self-recycling IAT effect compared to a control group. Consistent with this hypothesis, subjects who made a self-prophecy prediction revealed a significantly stronger self-recycling activation compared to a control group ($D_{control} = -.23, D_{treatment} = -.40; t(73) = 2.33, p = .02$).

Recycling Attitude. It was hypothesized that both the treatment and control conditions should have equivalent positive attitudes toward recycling. Recycling is a normative behavior and is generally thought to be positive (DeYoung 1990; Schultz 1998). Thus, most individuals should have a positive attitude toward recycling.

Consistent with this hypothesis, subjects who made a self-prophecy prediction were no different in implicitly measured recycling attitude than the control group ($D_{control} = 1.0, D_{treatment} = 1.1; t(76) = 0.70, p = .49$).

Implicit Self-Esteem. To the extent that a positive social identity is activated in memory, an associated boost in self-esteem was expected. Because individuals tend to reveal overall positive self-esteem (Brown, 1998), positive overall self-esteem in both the treatment and control groups was expected, but greater self-esteem in the treatment condition was expected. Consistent with this hypothesis, subjects who made a self-prophecy prediction revealed significantly stronger self-esteem compared to a control group ($D_{control} = .59, D_{treatment} = .74; t(74) = 2.14, p = .03$).

Discussion

Experiment 1 provides evidence for the hypothesis that making a self-prophecy prediction activates the relevant social identity in memory. In the current research, it is suggested that making a self-prophecy prediction activates self-knowledge relevant to recycling behavior. By activating a positive social identity (which includes the individual’s self as a member of that social group), it is expected that self-esteem should increase, since the individual is temporarily in a positive self-state.

These results also provide evidence of the inter-relatedness of self-esteem, self- and social identity, and attitudes in memory. Greenwald et al. (2002) suggest that there is a relationship between implicit attitudes, self-esteem, and self-identity. Specifically, Greenwald and colleagues posit that there is a connection between three concepts in memory: (1) self (individually or within the context of a social group), (2) a social object (e.g., recycling), and (3) an attribute (e.g., good or bad). Each of these concepts forms a vertex in a triadic relationship. Similar to Balance Theory (Heider 1958), Greenwald and colleagues suggest that people maintain balance among the relationships between the concepts at each vertex. The social object-self association corresponds to one’s identity, the social object-attribute association corresponds to one’s attitude, and the self-attribute association corresponds to one’s self-esteem. Specific to these results, when a particular self-identity is activated (in this case, the recycling self-identity), the positivity associated with that normative self-identity is reflected in the increase of that individual’s self-esteem.

Further, the lack of significant differences in recycling attitude between the conditions suggests that attitude accessibility is not a compelling explanation for self-prophecy effects. While not the focus of this research, previous findings in a related stream of research—mere-measurement—have suggested attitude accessibility as a possible explanation (Morrwitz, Johnson, and Schmittlein 1993). To the extent that making a prediction activates information related to the target behavior in memory, the ease of the accessibility of that previously activated information acts as a cue for behavior toward the target behavior. However, these results suggest that there is no difference between the level of activation of attitude information between the treatment and control, suggesting that both groups have equal accessibility to that information following a prediction.

Finally, while prior research has used implicit self-identity measures as independent variables to predict some normative behaviors, such as smoking (Swanson, Rudman, and Greenwald 2001), this is the first time a self-identity IAT has been used as a manipulated variable to assess the affects of an experimental treatment. To the extent that the IAT reflects individual-level changes in specific relational states, and those relational states are representative of theoretical models of social behavior, the IAT becomes a powerful tool to assess the links amongst social and self-associated objects in memory.

**EXPERIMENT 2**

While experiment 1 provides some evidence supporting a self-identity activation explanation for the self-prophecy effect, further evidence of the effect of social identity activation on self-esteem was warranted. Specifically, it was decided to manipulate self-esteem. Manipulating self-esteem prior to making the self-prophecy prediction was thought to be the strongest test possible of the predicted differences between a social identity and a cognitive dissonance explanation of the self-prophecy effect. Specifically, following a reduction of self-esteem, if a cognitive dissonance explanation for self-prophecy is correct, there should be no recovery of self-esteem following prediction, for the simple reason that making the self-prophecy prediction under the cognitive dissonance explanation should in itself reduce self-esteem. On the other hand, following artificial reduction of self-esteem, the social identity activation explanation of the self-prophecy effect suggests that making the prediction should activate the related normative social identity (e.g., recycling) as well as the associated positive valence associated with that identity, thus allowing self-esteem to recover.

**Sample and Procedure Overview.** One hundred eighty-two students from an introductory marketing course at a large west coast
university participated in a 2 (self-esteem manipulation: easy/difficult) x 2 (self-prophecy prediction: yes/no) experiment for course credit. Experiment 2 was identical to experiment 1 with the exception of the inclusion of a manipulation designed to temporarily decrease self-esteem. After a brief introduction the experimental session began with a self-esteem manipulation (the Remote Associates Test [RAT], described below). After completion of the RAT, subjects answered follow-up measures relating to their perceived performance on the exercise (see Appendix 3). These measures served to indicate whether the RAT had the intended effect. Subjects then either did or did not make the same self-prophecy prediction described in experiment 1. Following the self-prophecy manipulation, subjects completed the same set of IATs described above. At the conclusion of the IATs, subjects were debriefed and excused.

**Experimental Manipulation.** The RAT was employed to manipulate self-esteem (McFarlin and Blascovich 1984). The RAT was preferred over other self-esteem manipulations because the RAT does not require any deception on the part of the experimenter. Subjects were instructed that they would be completing a word generation task in which they would be given three related words. The task required the subject to provide an additional fourth word chosen to logically complete the word set. Two conditions (easy/difficult) of the RAT were used that varied in the difficulty of the required fourth word. Subjects were given 10 minutes to complete the RAT exercise. After time had elapsed, subjects were asked to stop with the task regardless of how many answers they had generated, and were informed they would be correcting their own answers. The experimenter indicated the correct responses to the subjects, while the subjects corrected their own paper and clearly marked the incorrect or non-response answers. The subjects then listed the number of correct responses they had generated at the top of the paper. Both the act of answering the questions as well as the public correcting and recording of the score induce an increase or decrease in self-esteem consistent with the difficulty condition, such that those in the difficult condition should reveal a decrease in self-esteem, while those in the easy condition should reveal boosted self-esteem.

**Self-Prophecy Manipulation.** The self-prophecy manipulation was identical to experiment 1. All subjects responded to a short questionnaire that required them to make predictions about a number of common behaviors, where half the subjects responded to a question specific to recycling behavior.

**IAT Procedure.** The IAT procedure was identical to experiment 1.

**Results**

**Manipulation Checks.** Subjects reported the extent to which they enjoyed the self-esteem manipulation tasks, and how well they felt they did on those tasks. Those in the difficult condition perceived that they did significantly worse than those in the easy condition when indicating the number of word sequence tasks they thought they completed correctly ($M_{\text{difficult}}=1.87, M_{\text{easy}}=3.89; p<.000$). Additionally, subjects in the difficult condition reported the task to be significantly less fun than those in the easy condition ($M_{\text{difficult}}=3.25, M_{\text{easy}}=4.75; p<.000$). These performance tasks are shown in appendix C. It should be noted that subjects’ self-esteem was not probed prior to the manipulation and IATs in order to minimize the chance of priming the self-concept or self-esteem. **Implicit Self-Identity.** Prior to analysis, subjects in the difficult condition who scored higher than the midpoint on the “fun” scale were removed from the analysis. It was thought that these individuals might receive self-related boosts from performing a task that was intellectually stimulating or interesting. This resulted in the removal of sixteen subjects. Similar to experiment 1, subjects who made a self-prophecy prediction about recycling behavior should activate a social identity representing recycling in memory. The activation of that social identity should be revealed in a stronger self-recycling IAT effect compared to the no-prediction group. Consistent with experiment 1, subjects who made a self-prophecy prediction revealed significantly stronger recycling self-identity compared to those who did not ($D_{\text{no prediction}}=.30, D_{\text{prediction}}=.41; F=4.1, p<.05$). Further, neither the main effect of the self-esteem manipulation nor the interaction was significant.

**Recycling Attitude.** Similar to experiment 1, because recycling is a normative behavior and is generally thought to be positive (DeYoung 1990; Schultz 1998), most individuals should have a positive attitude toward recycling. Consistent with this hypothesis, subjects who made a self-prophecy prediction were no different in implicitly measured recycling attitude than the control group ($D_{\text{prediction}}=.93, D_{\text{no prediction}}=1.03; F=1.35, p=.25$). Further, neither the main effect of the self-esteem manipulation nor the interaction was significant.

**Implicit Self-Esteem.** It was expected that, consistent with a social identity activation explanation for the self-prophecy effect, making a prediction about a normative behavior (in this case, recycling) should facilitate the recovery of self-esteem following self-esteem threat. Thus a two-way interaction was expected between the difficulty of the task and whether the subject made a self-prophecy prediction. Consistent with this expectation, a marginal two-way interaction obtained ($F(1, 166)=2.88, p=.10$).

**Discussion**

The results of experiment 2 suggest that making a self-prophecy prediction can alleviate the effects of prior self-esteem threat to an individual. This is consistent with the social identity explanation for self-prophecy effects, in that a social identity explanation would posit an increase in self-esteem following the activation of a positive social identity following a self-prophecy prediction. On the other hand, if making a self-prophecy prediction induces cognitive dissonance, one would expect that self-esteem would remain low following manipulation.

It was also promising that all of the effects found in experiment 1 were replicated. Consistent with experiment 1, there was no difference in implicitly measured attitudes toward recycling between the conditions. Again this suggests a lack of support for attitude accessibility explanations for the self-prophecy effect, since the results suggest that attitude toward recycling was equivalent across conditions. Further, experiment 2 revealed the expected main effect of social identity on the prediction. This again suggests that recycling social identity is activated following the self-prophecy manipulation. Further, the lack of a significant interaction on the self-recycling IAT suggests that the self-esteem manipulation is not affecting the activation of recycling social identity.

**GENERAL DISCUSSION**

The results of experiment 1 suggest that completing a self-prophecy prediction request activates related social identity in memory, such that self-knowledge is activated relevant to recycling behavior. The results of experiment 2 suggest that completing a self-prophecy prediction request alleviates the effects of prior self-esteem threat to an individual. These results are more consistent with a social identity explanation for self-prophecy rather than a cognitive dissonance explanation. If making a self-prophecy prediction induces cognitive dissonance, it would be expected that self-esteem would remain low after a self-esteem manipulation.
Using a social identity explanation, the current studies found an increase in self-esteem following the activation of a positive social identity following a self- prophecy prediction request.

These results provide evidence of the inter-relatedness of self-esteem, self-identity, and attitudes in memory (Greenwald et al. 2002). Greenwald and colleagues (2002) posit that there is a connection between the self, a social object (e.g., recycling), and an attribute (e.g., good or bad). As was the case with the current research, when a particular social identity is activated (e.g., recycling), the positivity associated with that normative social identity is reflected in the increase of an individual’s self-esteem.

Finally, and while not the focus of this research, the lack of significant differences in recycling attitude between conditions suggests that attitude accessibility is not a compelling explanation for self-prophecy. To the extent that making a prediction activates information related to the target behavior in memory, the ease of the accessibility of that previously activated information acts as a cue for behavior toward the target behavior. However, this research suggests that there is no difference between the level of activation of attitude information between treatment and control conditions, suggesting that both groups have equal accessibility to that information following a prediction request.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Using social identity theory (e.g., Tajfel and Turner 1979) as a theoretical framework, where social identity refers to the component of the self-concept that is derived from actual or perceived membership in social groups, we tested across four experiments whether exposing consumers to a social identity threat would result in the avoidance of products associated with that identity. In exploring this issue the present research contributes to the marketing and psychology literatures in several notable ways. To our knowledge, this is the first research to examine how consumer preferences are influenced by social identity threat. Second, this research extends previous findings that consumers often demonstrate preferences that are congruent with self-perceptions (Sirgy 1982) and primed self-identities (Mandel 2003; Reed 2004). Third, we build upon social identity theory by highlighting a behavior that is unique to the consumption context—the avoidance of products associated with a threatened identity. Fourth, the present research demonstrates that this avoidance tendency is related to a desire for self-protection and not related to other motives such as self-enhancement and self-verification. Finally, we identify key moderators of this avoidance tendency—self-esteem and ingroup identification.

Social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979) proposes that identity is comprised of two components: personal identity (i.e., identity related to a person’s individual sense of self) and social identity (i.e., identity related to groups to which a person belongs or is affiliated). The theory further purports that situational demands can activate one particular component of identity which will, in turn, impact the way an individual thinks, feels, and behaves. We propose that when one aspect of consumer identity becomes threatened, under certain conditions, consumers will become motivated to avoid products associated with that threatened aspect identity and will instead prefer products associated with an alternative identity. This notion differs from a priming account of shifts in consumer preferences which suggests that priming activates relevant concepts in memory and increases the accessibility of related information when making judgments (Srull and Wyer 1980). Thus, priming often leads consumers to prefer products that are consistent with currently activated concepts. In the present research, we suggest that when consumers are motivated to protect the self from identity threat, they will prefer products that are inconsistent with the threatened aspect of identity.

In study 1, we set out to provide preliminary evidence that consumers will avoid products associated with a threatened aspect of identity. Participants were either presented with information that threatened their gender identity, enhanced their gender identity, or was neutral with regards to their gender identity. Participants then evaluated films that were either related to their own gender identity or that were related to their university as an identity. As predicted, participants who received threatening information about gender as a social identity showed a significantly weaker preference for films associated with their gender than films associated with an alternative identity. Those in the enhance and control conditions did not report more negative evaluations of the gender than the intellectual films.

In study 2 we examine self-esteem as a moderator of reactions to social identity threat. Participants were first provided with information that either threatened gender as a social identity or that was neutral regarding identity. They then made a choice between a publication that was either associated with their own gender or that was associated with being intellectual. People low in self-esteem tended to avoid choosing a product associated with a threatened facet of identity, whereas product choice was not influenced by social identity threat when people were high in self-esteem. This effect was mediated by a desire to protect the self.

In study 3 we investigated the moderating role of ingroup identification. Participants’ gender identity was either threatened or not threatened and they were asked to choose between a publication that was associated with their own gender identity or that was neutral with regards to gender identity. In addition, participants completed a measure of ingroup (i.e., gender) identification. When social identity threat was present consumers low in ingroup identification were more likely to choose a neutral product over a gender related product, but when no social identity threat was present these consumers selected the gender related product. In contrast, those participants high in collective self-esteem maintained their preferences for the gender related product regardless of the presence of a threat.

Finally, in study 4, to enhance the generalizability of the findings, a threat to a new identity was examined—nationality. Participants either received threatening information about their nationality or neutral information about their nationality. In addition, participants were either given or not given the opportunity to affirm values that are important to the self. Past research shows that such a task enables people to deal with threat, and thus not use other means to cope. Participants then reported their consumption intentions regarding National Hockey League teams that were either highly associated with a Canadian identity or not. Finally, participants completed a measure of ingroup (i.e., Canadian) identification. Those participants who did not self-affirm showed less of a preference for a Canadian option when they were low as compared to high in Canadian identification. However, when participants were given the opportunity to self-affirm those low and high in Canadian identification showed a similar preference for the Canadian option.

The current research builds on social identity theory by demonstrating a unique response to social identity threat—shifts in product preferences and choices. Consumers who were low in self-esteem and low in ingroup identification were particularly likely to avoid products associated with a threatened identity, whereas those consumers high on these two traits were more likely to prefer the product associated with a threatened identity. The implications for both theory and practice are discussed.
ABSTRACT

We’ve long known that consumers’ brand preferences can be influenced by others (Stafford 1966). This study builds on previous research and explores the association between consumer brand purchases and those of one’s parents, peers and siblings. Further, it explores whether self-construal is a factor in the relation between reference group purchases and one’s own purchase behavior. We find that siblings play a dual role as referents, emulating both family and peers. We also find that self-construal influences perceptions of the importance played by one’s self versus others in brand purchases.

We’ve long known that consumers’ brand preferences can be influenced by others (Stafford 1966). This study builds on previous research and explores the association between consumer brand purchases and those of their parents, peers and siblings. Further, it explores whether self-construal is a factor in the relation between reference group purchases and one’s own purchase behavior. We first discuss previous research concerning types and sources of reference group influence and the concept of an individual’s interdependent and independent self-construal.

Types of Reference Group Influence

An early study on reference group influence presents a matrix categorizing influences on purchase of a variety of products and brands (Bourne, 1957). With this framework Bourne shows a strong reference group influence for public/luxury product or brand decisions and a lower reference group influence for private/necessity product or brand decisions. Building on this research, Park and Lessig (1977) define reference group as, “an actual or imaginary individual or group conceived of having significant relevance upon an individual’s evaluations, aspirations, or behavior” (p.102). Based on this definition and research, three “motivational influences” of reference groups were identified: informational, utilitarian, and value-expression (Deutsch and Gerard 1955 and Kelman 1961 in Park and Lessig 1977). Using a 14 question scale given to housewives and students the researchers determine that students were more susceptible than housewives to influence by reference groups in their brand and model decisions. In their study, Park and Lessig use the term “reference group” generally and the type of reference group in the questionnaire was not examined.

Bearden and Etzel (1982) expand this research by examining how reference groups influence the purchase of luxury versus necessity product categories and of public versus private goods. Using 13 of Park and Lessig’s 14 item scale, the results indicate there are differences in reference group influence with regard to public/private goods and luxury/necessity items. More utilitarian and value-expression influence occurs for public necessity purchases, while private luxury purchases involve more informational influence. Although their research highlights the need to consider the varying degrees of reference group influence in purchase decisions, the sources of the influence are neglected.

Sources of Reference Group Influence

It is evident from recent literature that intergenerational influence plays a role in brand preference. Intergenerational influence (IG influence), “refers to the within-family transmission of information, beliefs, and resources from one generation to the next” (Moore, Wilkie, and Lutz 2002, 17). Derived from the notion that reference group influence would be better understood by examining the individuals in the relationship, research by Moore, Wilkie and Lutz (2002) focuses on a dyad, specifically a mother-daughter pair. In this quantitative and qualitative study, they found a link between IG influence and brand equity of consumer packaged goods. Using a dyad-specific analytic method they determined that 69% of the time daughters correctly reported their mother’s brand, although the results were lower for household maintenance brands. They also found that IG influences continue to occur in adulthood, albeit they may be affected by disruptive and sustaining forces. For instance, roommates and peers may have a disruptive potential, while ethnic identity or an individual’s proximity to parents appear to be sustaining forces for IG influences.

What is not clear from the literature is what product types are most influenced by intergenerational reference groups. Moore, et al. (2002) findings build upon previous research by Moore and Lutz (1988) which demonstrates that consumers have a greater intergenerational preference associated with products visible in the home. Other studies indicate that there is a stronger impact of family on convenience items as compared to shopping goods (Heckler, Childers and Arunachalam 1989). Yet, Moschis (1985) hypothesized that parents influence their children’s preferences for brands and stores and that parental influence is greater for shopping goods than convenience or specialty goods. While these studies show conflicting findings, what is clear is that direct and indirect reference group influence is important in issues of family communication and consumer learning.

Drawing on Bearden and Etzel’s work (1982), Childers and Rao (1992) extend the concept of a reference group to differentiate between non-family or peer-based influence and family influence, particularly intergenerational influence. Examining Thai and U.S. subjects, their findings highlight the importance of culture on reference group influence. Two referents were used to determine whether intergenerational reference group influence resulted from direct interaction or an indirect interaction. Similar to previous research, findings indicate that the peer-based influence was stronger for public necessities and family-based influence was stronger for private necessities. In addition, Thai subjects showed more influence from family for private and public products, while the U.S. subjects showed a larger family influence for private goods as opposed to public goods.

Another study by Feltham (1998) also explores the change over time in family and peer influence on brand purchase. Focusing on parental influence, Feltham studied first year and fourth year college students and determined that parental influence was important, yet it appeared to decline as a function of their year in college. She then examined the influence of roommates on personal care product purchases and found that roommate influence increased as a function of more years in college.

Previous research identifies family and non-family relationships and culture as a source of reference group influence; however, very few studies examine the intragenerational relationships and their influence on purchase behavior or brand preference. For instance much of the research on sibling influence on consumption has focused on negative or deviant behaviors, as highlighted by

1The authors wish to thank Daniel Blake for his advice.
Dunn’s (2005) commentary in a special issue of the Journal of Family Psychology. Cotte and Wood (2004) used structural equation modeling on data from triadic relationships (one parent and two siblings over 18 years of age) to show that intergenerational and intragenerational family influences account for 29% of an individual’s innovativeness. The parent was more influential than the sibling, accounting for 65% of the variance in familial influence (three exogenous variables). The sibling accounted for 24% of the variance and birth order accounted for 11%, with later-born (typically second-born) siblings exhibiting greater innovativeness. Siblings have not really been examined in terms of their influence on consumer behavior in general or brand purchase more specifically. These findings lead us to predict that young adults will be most influenced by their parents, then by siblings, and then by close friends.

Hypothesis 1: Brand purchases will be most closely associated with parents’ brand purchases, followed by siblings, and finally by close friends.

Independent and Interdependent Self-Construals

Childers and Rao’s (1992) study stresses the importance of intergenerational influence on product consumption. In their consideration of intergenerational influence they note a distinction between nuclear families and extended families, addressing the notion of intragenerational influence. They also note differences between communalistic societies (those that typify extended families) and individualistic societies (those that typify nuclear families). Therefore, they postulate that family influence in cultures with extended families will be relatively strong, since there are more family members to reference, whereas in individualistic societies, the individual self may play a larger role.

Triandis (1988) discusses cultural variables of self by describing concepts of individualism and collectivism, where an individual prioritizes personal goals versus subordinating their personal goals to others. This line of research discusses the influence of culture on behavior and conceptualizes three self views: the private self, the public self, and the collective self. Triandis posits that these three views of self help determine the cognitions an individual uses in social situations. Important here is that these views of self are not distinct and that an individual utilizes one or all of them depending on the situation.

Other studies explore independent versus interdependent views of self. Markus and Kitayama (1991) address two views of self and the influence in evidence in differences among cultures. For instance, the independent view of self is considered more separate or unique and focuses on internal attributes, as demonstrated by people from the West (North American cultures), while the interdependent self-view is seen as more connected and concerned with social contexts, as shown in many people from non-Western backgrounds (Asian, Latin American, African and many Southern European cultures).

Useful for research on the self within peer and family influence is Singelis’s (1994) research on a “dual self” (p. 581). In this concept, he argues that an individual has two well-developed self-construals and uses one or both in a variety of situations. Self-construal is defined as, “thoughts, feelings and actions concerning one’s relationship to others, and the self as distinct from others” (p. 581). To measure this dual self, he developed a theoretical and empirical scale, measuring independent and interdependent self-construals. His study used questions from a variety of instruments measuring self-concepts as well as his own questions to develop a scale (Self-Construal Scale or SCS) that effectively measures undergraduate students’ experiences and behaviors focusing on self-construal (Kuhn and McPartland, 1954; Triandis, McClusker, and Hui 1990; Yamaguchi, Kuhlman, Sugimori 1992; Cross and Markus 1991; Bhawuk and Brislin 1992). The findings demonstrate the validity of the SCS and confirm that individuals are “two-sided,” yet it asserts that when the unit of analysis is the individual, these two selves must be considered separately (Singelis 1994, p. 588).

Based upon the previous work on self construal, we expect brand purchases to be influenced by one’s dominant self-construal. Thus, we posit:

Hypothesis 2: High Interdependent individuals will report greater influence by others (family or close friends) than the self, while High Independent individuals will report greater self influence.

Cross cultural research on the self has demonstrated that Western (e.g. United States) subjects tend to have independent self-construals while those from non-Western cultures tend to have interdependent self-construals (i.e., Lee, Aaker and Gardner 2000). As some nations become more culturally diverse (cf., Ramirez and de la Cruz 2003), we are likely to find significant differences in dominant self-construal as individuals acculturate to the adopted culture. With this in mind, we posit the following about a sample of respondents in one culture, the United States:

Hypothesis 3: Subjects who have more recently immigrated to the U.S. are more likely to have interdependent self-construals, while those who have resided in the U.S. longer will be more likely to have independent self-construals.

METHOD

Participants. Two hundred and fourteen undergraduate students from a large public university in the western United States took part in the study for extra credit in introduction to marketing courses. Data were collected from students in two different sections of marketing via an online survey. Seven respondents’ surveys were incomplete and those respondents were dropped from the analysis, leaving a total of 207 participants.

The remaining 207 survey respondents are a diverse group. Of the 207 participants in the final sample, 32% described themselves as the first-generation in their family to live in the United States. Twenty-one percent described themselves as second-generation, 13% described themselves as third generation, and 21% said their great-grandparents were in the United States so they are at least fourth-generation family members in the U.S. Ten percent answered “don’t know” to our inquiry regarding the number of generations their family has been in the United States and four percent were attending the University as international students.

We asked respondents what language(s) they speak at home. A language other than English was reported as the primary language spoken at home for 35% of our respondents. There was a great deal of variation in the foreign languages spoken in those homes. Sixty-five percent of the respondents said English is the primary language in their home, although additional language(s) are also spoken in 22% of the homes.

Fifty-eight percent of the respondents are female (42% are male) and 54% are the traditional age of undergraduates (18-24). Thirty-three percent are age 25-34, 10% are 35-44, and 3% are 45-54 years of age. Most of the respondents (69%) are single, 28% are married or in a committed partnership and 3% are divorced. There is also diversity in their living arrangements. Forty-three percent live with parents, 28% with siblings, 25% with a spouse/partner, 12% with children, 12% with a roommate or roommates who is/are close friend(s), 8% with a roommate or roommates who are not
close friends, 4% with grandparents, 4% with in-laws, 2% with uncles/aunts, and 2% with cousins.

Procedure. Respondents completed an online survey at their leisure over a four-day period. The first question assessed respondents’ usual brand purchase/usage by asking them to “name the brand [they] usually buy/own/use” for each of 26 different product categories. Product categories varied from household items (e.g., laundry detergent and household cleaners), to shopping goods (e.g., computers and mp3-type player), to service providers (e.g., airline and fast food restaurant) and media (e.g., magazine and morning news show). The order in which the product categories appeared in the survey was randomized across the respondents. If a respondent doesn’t buy/own/use a product in the product category then she was asked to write “DB” for “don’t buy/use/own” and she was asked to write “DK” if she didn’t “know, don’t remember, or don’t have a usual brand.”

The next three questions measured the brand match between the respondent and close friends, family, and siblings. For each of the 26 product categories, the respondents indicated their level of agreement (where 1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree) with the following statements, “My close friends buy/own/use the same brand as I do,” “My parents buy/own/use the same brand as I do,” and “My siblings buy/own/use the same brand as I do.” Respondents could also indicate “not applicable” for each measure.

Self construal was measured with Singelis’s (1994) 24-item Self Construal Scale. Following the Self Construal Scale, respondents were asked to “Imagine you are going to buy each of the following products for the first time. Who would you most look to for help in making your brand choice? Of yourself, your family and your close friends, who is the most important, second most important, and least important (of the three) in helping you make this choice?” They used a pull-down menu to indicate level of importance of family, friends, and self, for each of the 26 product categories. This measure was followed by demographic measures of gender, age, ethnic identification, race (multiple answers possible), marital status, people with whom one lives now, people with whom one lived growing up (a measure of extended family), primary language spoken in the home growing up and primary language spoken in the home now, additional languages spoken in the home now, and the number of generations in which the respondent’s family has been in the United States (from 1=respondent is the first generation in the U.S. to 4+=great grandparents were in the U.S. Respondents could also answer “don’t know.”)

RESULTS

Measuring Self- Construal

Self-construal was determined by creating a median split for both of the self-construal subscales, Interdependence and Independence, then identifying subjects as High-Interdependent-Low Independent (n=35), Low Interdependent-High Independent (n=36), High Interdependent-High Independent (n=69) and Low Interdependent-Low Independent (n=67). For analyses considering Self-Construal, we only included subjects with High-Independent-Low Independent (Interdependent) and with Low Interdependent-High Independent (Independent) (cf. Escalas and Bettman 2005).

Hypothesis 1: Association of Brand Preferences

Hypothesis 1 predicted that the greatest match among product choice would occur with parents, then with siblings, and finally with friends. A two-way ANOVA within subjects design of product X source of product match (close friends, parents, and siblings) was conducted. Data for respondents without siblings were omitted from those cells. The results presented a significant product X source of product match interaction (F=1.516, p<.05). The means are reported in Table 1.

Perhaps not surprisingly, respondents had strong agreement that their siblings bought/owned the same brand as they in most categories. In most categories, the agreement pattern was similar to that of parents, but in several categories, patterns of agreement with siblings looked similar to friends, not parents. This was particularly true in fashionable products (i.e. watch, MP3-type player, and shoes). While our data do not permit analysis of direction of influence, and it is likely that siblings are rated high in the match because they are similarly influenced by parents, these results are intriguing because they demonstrate the dual role that siblings play as family members and peers.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 predicted that subjects who have interdependent self-construals will be more likely to rely upon others for influence in brand choice, while those with independent self-construals will be more likely to report self as most important in the decision. Responses for “close friends” and “family” were combined to form “others” as a source in the analysis of degree of influence.

A Chi-square analysis was performed on the self-reported source of most important influence (others or self) by self construal (interdependent, independent) for each product category. Subjects who reported not using or not owning the product, or who didn’t know the brand they own or use were omitted from the analysis. Significant differences in the predicted direction occurred for four product categories: Computer (X^2 (1)=5.161, p<.05), Automobile (X^2(1)=10.482, p<.01), Pet (X^2(1)=3.60, p=.05), and TV (X^2(1)=3.60, p=.05). In all of these cases, interdependent respondents were more likely to rely on others than were independent respondents, who were more likely to report self as having the most influence on brand choice (see Table 2). These categories represent products that are likely to be high involvement decisions due to their importance, durability, high cost, and risk.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 predicted that respondents who had more recently immigrated to the United States would be more likely to be interdependent while those who had resided longer in the United States would be more likely to have independent self construals. A Chi-square analysis was performed on the frequency data (reported in Table 3).

Although the results were not significant (X^2 (3)=3.806, ns), the pattern is consistent with our hypothesis. Analysis of the self-reported ethnic and racial origins may provide greater insight; however, our sample sizes were too small.

DISCUSSION

Consumer research on social influence on product and brand preferences and choice has evolved to include different forms of influence and to consider cultural orientation. In this paper, we have considered the association with siblings, parents and peers on brand preferences. While our data did not permit us to examine the direction of influence but only the “match” in brand preference, our data demonstrate an interaction among product type and association. It is interesting to note that siblings are associated with the greatest degree of similarity in brand purchases, and that their pattern emulates both parents (perhaps reflecting common parental influence) and peers, particularly for fashionable products.

Additionally, we examined the role of self construal on self-reported influence on brand choice. The significant findings, while for only four of the product categories, were nonetheless interesting.
because they showed the predicted effect for particularly important decisions.

Our analysis was somewhat limited by the sample size, particularly when analyzing “interdependent” versus “independent” self construals, given the way in which we classified respondents. Our pattern of results lend support for a continued exploration into the area of social influence on brand and product preferences. Although not analyzed in this paper due to sample size and coding challenges, we are hopeful that a more detailed analysis of self-reported brand names, of types of products, and of ethnic and racial orientation will provide a richer understanding of this complex relationship.

**REFERENCES**


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**TABLE 1**

**MEAN COMPARISONS FOR PRODUCT MATCH**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product Category</th>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Siblings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laundry</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peanut Butter</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pain Reliever</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
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<td>Coffee</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
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<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Cleaner</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toothpaste</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soap</td>
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<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
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<td>4.8</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>MP3 Type Player</td>
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<td>3.7</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.7</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
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</table>

*NOTE:* Respondents indicated their level of agreement (where 1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree) with the following statements, “My close friends buy/own/use the same brand as I do,” “My parents buy/own/use the same brand as I do,” and “My siblings buy/own/use the same brand as I do.”
### TABLE 2
FREQUENCY (N) OF MOST INFLUENCE BY SELF VS. OTHERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product Category</th>
<th>Interdependent</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Independent</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Myself</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Myself</td>
<td>Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundry</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>Peanut Butter</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pain Reliever</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Television*</td>
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<td>14</td>
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*p<.05

### TABLE 3
IMMIGRATION RECENCY AND SELF-CONSTRUAL

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<tr>
<th>Generation in US</th>
<th>Interdependent</th>
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<tr>
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<td>32</td>
<td>30</td>
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</table>


We would like to propose a roundtable session on the continuing discourse around feminism and its role within marketing and consumer research. In the 1990s a number of papers advocating feminist analyses of marketing and consumer phenomena appeared in the literature. Feminist contributions highlighted the masculinist ideology of marketing and consumer thought (Hirschman, 1993, Fischer and Bristor, 1994), how feminism and feminist research might impact upon and contribute to consumer and marketing research in practice (Stern 1992, Bristor and Fischer, 1993, Penaloza, 1994, Woodruffe 1996, Catterall, Maclaran and Stevens, 1997, 1999, Woodruffe and Bettany 1999) and how feminist theory can contribute to, and critique the ‘world of consumption’ outside of, and influenced by, academia (Dobscha, 1993, Ozanne and Stern, 1993, Bristor and Fischer, 1995, McDonagh and Prothero, 1997, Schroeder and Borgerson, 1998).

In 1991, the series of Association of Consumer Research conferences on Gender and Consumer Behaviour was established (Costa, 1991) providing a regular outlet for debate and discussion of (among others) feminist issues in the field of consumer research. Following this, the new century heralded the publication of the (in our view, much needed and most welcome) book ‘Marketing and Feminism: current issues and research’ (Catterall, Maclaran and Stevens, 2000). This book presented contributions on the potential of feminism to inform and enrich marketing and consumer research on multicultural issues (Penaloza 2000), advertising (Stern 2000, O’Donohoe 2000), consumer research practice (Friend and Thompson 2000, Hogg, Bettany, and Long 2000), shopping and retail marketing (Eccles and Woodruffe Burton 2000), critical approaches to marketing practice (Fisher 2000, Costa 2000, Dobscha and Ozanne 2000) and the evolving relationship between marketing and feminism (Scott 2000, Brown 2000). Following these developments it seemed as though feminists had at last found their voice and some recognition in the Marketing and Consumer Research academy.

Can it be, however, that things have gone slightly awry since then? Have the/we feminists made any headway in Consumer Research or in the wider Marketing discipline since the turn of the century? What is the direction of feminist work and what are the substantive debates? It seems to us (and other scholars) that feminism in the marketing and consumer behaviour disciplines has slightly lost its way. For example, at ACR 2005, Catterall, Maclaren and Stevens noted that ‘in recent years critical feminist voices have been scarcely audible’ and that ‘postmodern and post-feminist perspectives have diluted feminism’s transformational potential, leading to a critical impasse in marketing and consumer research’. In addition, work has emerged from consumer research which is highly critical of the feminist stance on fashion and beauty, entering debates in the public sphere begun by Naomi Wolf (1991) and Susan Faludi (1991) (Scott 2005). Moreover, Marketing faculty are finding outlets in other disciplines for their feminist inspired work (Borgerson 2001, 2005). Others are returning to past concerns to try and reinvigorate the original discussions and reinvigorate the feminist agenda (Catterall et al 2005, Bettany 2006, Bettany and Woodruffe-Burton 2006).

The aim of this round table is to attempt to examine and confront these emerging issues and to examine more generally the potential role and direction for feminism in consumer and marketing research in the 21st century. The ultimate (perhaps ambitious?) purpose of this roundtable is to begin the process of feminism dictating the terms of its own debate, or at least to begin to outline a set of recognizable theoretical, methodological and political debates to inform, structure and stimulate an invigorated feminist research agenda in the marketing and consumer behaviour fields. This purpose emanates from discussions between participants at the 9th Gender, Marketing and Consumer Behaviour Conference, 2006, Edinburgh, the Association of Consumer Research Conference 2005, San Antonio, the Association of Consumer Research Conference 2006, Orlando, and during the UK ESRC seminar series on Critical Marketing 2005/2006. A second edition of the book ‘Marketing and Feminism: current issues and research’ (Catterall et al 2000) edited by Lorna Stevens, Shona Bettany, Helen Woodruffe-Burton and Lorraine Friend is planned, based on the outcome of these discussions.

The round table session will be opened by a short presentation by the organizers followed by a brief (two-three minute) presentation from each participant to open up the roundtable discussion for all.

References and Further Reading


McDonagh, P and Prothero, A (1997) Leapfrog Marketing: the contribution of ecofeminist thought to the world of patriarchal marketing *Marketing Intelligence and Planning* 15, 7 361-88


EXTENDED ABSTRACT:

The goal of this research program was to assess the effect of identity salience on identity-specific risk perceptions. We operationalized this in a gender setting, by activating gender identity salience and assessing its effect on breast cancer risk perceptions. Apart from non-melanoma skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer for women and occupies the sixth place in the causes of death ranking. Early diagnosis is critical for successful treatment and to a large extent reliant on precautionary and screening behavior. Women’s personal sense of vulnerability to breast cancer is the most important determinant of screening behavior, endowing it with special societal relevance and making it the target of annual breast cancer awareness campaigns.

Drawing on different theories, two diametrically opposite predictions can be made for the effect of gender identity salience on breast cancer risk perceptions. According to the cognitive accessibility account, priming gender should result in an increased accessibility of gender-related constructs like breast cancer, which, through the availability heuristic, should lead to increased breast cancer risk perceptions. On the other hand, we know from the literature on defensive mechanisms that they occur especially when central aspects of identity, important for one’s self-esteem, are threatened, and that they are able to affect risk estimates. For example research has shown that greater threat and personal relevance minimize risk (e.g., Jemmott, Ditto and Croyde 1986, JPSP).

Since women’s reproductive organs are central to their sense of gender identity, the motivational defense mechanism account predicts that defensive risk minimization of breast cancer is especially likely under conditions of heightened gender identity salience. The results of a series of experiments, using widely different gender prime manipulations, provide support for the second account. Under conditions of heightened gender identity salience, women’s risk perceptions for gender-related diseases decrease.

In experiment 1A, we found that women in a gender prime condition, who were asked to write essays about the role of their gender in their lives, reported significantly lower breast cancer risk perceptions than women in a control condition, whereas no such difference could be observed on other gender-unrelated risk estimates. We replicated these findings in experiment 1B. The validity of this manipulation was confirmed in a pilot study, showing that women in the gender prime condition have higher scores on trait measures of femininity and lower scores on trait measures of masculinity than women in the control condition. In experiment 2 we used the same gender identity manipulation to show behavioral consequences in a setting of donations to scientific research. Whereas most (77%) female participants in a control condition chose to donate money to ovarian cancer research, this percentage dropped substantially (to 42%) in the gender prime condition. In experiment 3 we used a completely different and inconspicuous gender prime manipulation and investigated boundary conditions of this effect. We reasoned that defensive processes would only come into play when participants’ own gender was primed, not when gender as a general cognitive category was primed. In the latter case, we expected the cognitive accessibility mechanism to prevail. We operationalized this by asking our female participants to determine the gender of a series of Dutch words. Participants in the general gender prime condition got an equal amount of male and female words, whereas participants in the own gender prime condition got only female words and participants in the control condition didn’t determine word genders at all. The pattern of results confirmed the hypotheses: participants in the general gender prime condition reported the highest breast cancer risk estimates (due to the cognitive accessibility mechanism), while participants in the own gender prime condition reported the lowest breast cancer risk estimates (due to the defensive mechanism) with the breast cancer risk perceptions of participants in the control condition falling in between. No effects were apparent on gender-unrelated risk estimates. In experiment 4 we used yet another gender priming manipulation. This time we asked female participants to rate the applicability of stereotypical traits to either women (gender prime condition) or camels (control condition). Given the prevalence of stereotyping in media descriptions of social categories, this setting was chosen in order to provide additional insight into the conditions that could elicit such defensive mechanisms in real life. Again, women in the gender prime condition reported significantly lower breast cancer risk estimates than women in the control condition, whereas no such difference was apparent for gender-unrelated risks. We further predicted that when women would be encouraged to associate with their social category (by using positively valenced stereotype descriptions), stronger stereotype endorsement should be related to lower perceived vulnerability of breast cancer, whereas when the stereotype content was negative, there should be no link between stereotype endorsement and breast cancer risk perceptions. This pattern of results was observed and provides more direct evidence of the process underpinning the influence of identification on risk.

In sum, five experiments, using three different gender identity priming procedures, consistently showed defensive minimizing of breast cancer risk perceptions under conditions of heightened gender identity salience. As many breast cancer awareness campaigns, by their very nature, are likely to increase gender identity salience (e.g., by simply showing women or by using appeals like ‘If you’re a woman, read the following . . . ’), we believe these results have important societal implications.
PARASKEVIDEKATRIAPHOBIA: THE EFFECT OF SUPERSTITION ON RISK-TAKING BEHAVIOR

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

While academic research has recognized the importance of other various elements of the social and cultural environments in marketing, individuals’ superstitious beliefs and their impact on consumer judgments and decision-making have received surprisingly little attention. This lack of investigation into superstitious beliefs (that is, beliefs that are inconsistent with the known laws of nature or with what is generally considered rational in a society; The American Heritage Dictionary 1985) is all the more surprising given their strong impact on the marketplace. For example, between $800 and $900 million is lost in business in the United States each Friday the 13th because people do not want to go to work or tend to business in general that day (Palazzolo 2005). It is estimated that as many as 9% of Americans are paraskevidekatriaphobics-afflicted with a fear of Friday the 13th (Vyse 1997). In fact, paraskevidekatriaphobia influences a wide variety of decisions, from architecture to personal risk aversion. For example, 90% of Otis elevators have no 13th floor button, the U.S. Navy won’t launch a ship on Friday the 13th, and many Americans won’t fly, get married, start a new job, or close on a house on this date (Brockenbrough 2006; Harris 2006). The impact of superstitions on U.S. businesses is also demonstrated by the fact that an increasing number of U.S. companies are adopting the principles of feng shui, often hiring feng shui experts who apply these superstitious Chinese practices to offices in such esteemed companies as Smith Barney and Morgan Stanley (Tsang 2004). Other examples of common superstitious beliefs in the United States include horse-shoes and knocking on wood bringing good luck; and the number 13, walking under a ladder, or breaking a mirror bringing bad luck.

However, despite their prevalence, we still do not know the degree to which consumers use superstitions, knowingly or unknowingly, in their decision-making. Systematic study of such effects on managerial and consumer decision-making is just beginning to enter the marketing literature. For example, investigating Chinese consumers’ perceptions of alphanumeric brand names, Ang (1997) found that those containing lucky numbers and letters (e.g., A8) were perceived more favorably than those containing unlucky letters and numbers (e.g., F4). Next, a content analysis of Chinese advertising showed that unlucky number 4 was under-represented and lucky number 8 was over-represented in advertised prices in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan (Simmons and Schindler 2003).

With this paper, we add to this nascent body of knowledge by examining how superstitious beliefs influence U.S. consumers’ risk-taking behavior. Given the commonly held belief that Friday the 13th brings bad luck, salience of this superstition is likely to impact decision-making under uncertainty. Support for the influence of superstitious beliefs on risk-taking behavior comes from the literature on gambling and the illusion of control (e.g., Langer 1975). For example, gamblers bet more money and were more confident of winning when throwing the dice themselves than when someone else threw the dice for them, even though in both cases the probability of winning was the same (Strickland, Lewicki, and Katz 1966). Additionally, superstitious rituals and beliefs often increase in periods of stress or uncertainty (Keinan 2002; Malinowski 1954).

Therefore, in a series of studies we seek to test how salience of superstitious beliefs affects decision-making under risk. We hypothesize and find that priming participants with Friday the 13th and its associated potential for bad luck (vs. a neutral prime: Tuesday the 19th) will result in their making more risk-averse choices. Furthermore, in a second study we show that superstitious beliefs impact risk-taking behavior unconsciously. Lastly, we demonstrate that the degree of uncertainty inherent in a gamble moderates the effect of superstitious beliefs on risk-taking. In particular, a third study finds that the greater the uncertainty (i.e., the more equal the chances of winning and not winning a gamble), the greater the impact of superstitious beliefs.
The Effect of Match and Mismatch between Trait and State Emotion on At-Risk Gambling Intention and Restoration

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ABSTRACT

This research examined the effects of casino design and congruence in trait and state emotion on at-risk gambling intentions and psychological restoration. Video simulations representing two casino designs (playground vs. gaming) were presented to 484 participants (241 males) varying in gambling sub-type. For low trait arousal participants, at-risk intentions were higher when environmental arousal was high (mismatch) than when low (match). For high trait arousal participants, at-risk intentions were higher when environmental arousal was high than when low. A similar pattern of results occurred for restoration but only for pleasure trait-state congruency in non-problem gamblers. The effects of congruence in trait and state emotion are bounded by the positivity of the outcome (at-risk gambling intention vs. restoration), the design of the casino (playground vs. gaming), the dimension of emotion (arousal vs. pleasure), the pole of the emotion (low vs. high), and gambler subtype (problem vs. non-problem).

INTRODUCTION

The impact of environmental variables has recently garnered a prominent focus in the study of gambling behavior (Adams, 2005; Earley, 2000; Griffiths & Parke, 2003; Wood, Griffiths, Chappell & Davies, 2004). Environmental features of gaming settings are assumed to activate cognitive and emotional precursors to problem gambling (Sharpe, 2002). The design of a casino, as well as specific environmental elements within the casino can affect the likelihood of gambling beyond planned levels.

Emotional responses vary across casino designs (Finlay, Kanetkar, Londerville & Marmurek, in press; Marmurek, Finlay, Kanetkar and Londerville, 2006). Atmospheric variations induced by a casino’s environment influence an individual’s sense of cognitive well-being (restoration) as well as the likelihood of gambling beyond planned levels (at-risk gambling intention). Emotional impact has been contrasted for two casino designs: the playground design (Kranes, 1995); and, the gaming design (Friedman, 2000).

Kranes (1995) conceptualizes casinos as playgrounds, spacious places (high ceilings, uncluttered layout of slot machines) where the environment is inviting and energizing, stimulating curiosity and exploration. Playground casinos convey an instantly-recognizable theme, inducing senses of order, freedom, and vitality. These casinos feature natural elements such as sunlight, warm colours, the presence of vegetation and moving water. This constellation of natural attributes is among those known to elicit favourable emotional reactions (Nasar, 2000).

In contrast to Kranes (1995), Friedman (2000) proposed that the design of a casino be related to functionality. In the gaming design, gambling equipment is the dominant decorative feature; décor is used only to highlight and enhance the equipment layout. High ceilings and interior décor that is impressive, imposing or memorable are to be avoided so as not to distract from gambling activity. A maze layout of slot machines provides secluded, intimate gambling areas. Finlay and colleagues have found that the playground design, relative to the gaming design, generated higher levels of situational pleasure and arousal, feelings of being psychologically refreshed, and estimates of the likelihood of gambling beyond planned levels.

Hogan and Roberts (2000) argue that, in general, behavioral outcomes are a function of the degree of fit between defined dimensions of situational and trait factors. “Personality traits may be viewed as facilitating or thwarting the pursuit of …goals in a behaviour setting context” (Walsh, Craig & Price, 2000, p. x). The current research examines the interplay between the individual temperaments of gamblers and characteristics of casino environments. The casino designs induce situational emotions. Complementary or opposing emotions may characterize the personality or character of the gamblers. It is hypothesized that the emotional congruence between a gambler’s temperament and the affect created by the gambling environment will determine gambling behaviour. Literature on environmental emotion, individual temperament and trait-environment interactions is reviewed briefly in the next section.

The emotional impact of an environment can be defined along the PAD dimensions of pleasure, arousal and dominance (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Michon, Chebat & Turley, 2005; Valdez & Mehrabian, 1994). These dimensions consistently account for emotional responses across a variety of environments. For example, Mehrabian and Wixen (1986) reported that male preference ratings of video games were related to their PAD ratings. Colors and sounds influenced the level of pleasure; information rate (complexity) influenced arousal; and, player control options affected feelings of dominating the game.

Individuals may be characterized by their natural predisposition or temperament. Temperament is described as “an individual’s average emotional state across a representative sample of life situations” (Mehrabian, 1996, p. 134). Emotions are defined, as they were for environmental emotional impact, as combinations of the three independent PAD variables. Pleasure assesses an individual’s relative preponderance of positive versus negative states; arousal measures the chronic strength and duration of arousing responses; dominance gauges an individual’s characteristic feeling of control over life situations. For example, Mehrabian (1995) assessed the emotional structure of individuals who attempted suicide. Suicidal individuals were more unpleasant, more likely to become aroused and more likely to feel submissive in situations than were controls.

A dominant theme in environmental psychology is that behaviour is determined jointly by environmental and person variables such as temperament (Hogan & Roberts, 2000; Kahana, Lovegreen, Kahana & Kahana, 2003; Little, 2000; Mehrabian, 1995-1996; Timko, Moos & Finney, 2000). PAD temperament is similar to the notion of “first nature” proposed by Little (1996). When a person is compelled by a situation to act in a way that is not “natural” to that person, then a cost in well-being is exacted. The greater the discord between situational burdens and first natures, the greater will be the psychological strain. Moreover, when natural tendencies are suppressed for intense or lengthy periods of time, the effectiveness of information processing and problem solving may
be associated with ill-being. Reflecting the hypothesis that any departure from exact balance would reflect the hypothesis that any departure from exact balance would
poor outcome. Too little of a resource has a neutral effect; Lawton proposed that positive incongruence erodes well-being.

situational stimuli has been reported in attitude changes studies. The relationship to well-being disappears below some threshold 
“Lawton (p. 102). Positive incongruence occurs when there is an environmental oversupply; negative incongruence exists when there is in an environmental undersupply. Lawton proposed that positive incongruence erodes well-being. Only an excess of a resource (e.g., too much noise) would lead to a poor outcome. Too little of a resource has a neutral effect; “the relationship to well-being disappears below some threshold” (Lawton, p. 103).

The advantage of harmonizing individual differences with situational stimuli has been reported in attitude changes studies. Matching the content of a message to characteristics of the recipient’s motivational, cognitive or emotional predisposition is an effective mode of persuasion (Pettit, Wheeler & Bizer, 2000; Schwartz & Clore, 1996). One specific area of persuasion research has identified the importance of matching to self-schema (cognitive information about the self that guides the processing of self-related information). Wheeler, Pettit and Bizer (2005) reported that messages framed to match to an individual’s level of extroversion led to greater elaboration of quality ad arguments and more positive attitudes towards the advertised product. When extroversion was high, the positioning “by purchasing the advertised VCR, you will be the life of your party” was better received by extraverts than was a mismatched message (“by purchasing the VCR you will have all the luxuries of a movie theatre without having to deal with the crowds”).

In the health promotion domain, the promotion of physical activity produced reliably more favorable outcomes when the tone and substance of persuasive appeals were compatible with an individual’s motives for engaging in the activity (Bailis, Fleming & Segall, 2005). Messages emphasizing the challenge of the activity were more effective at motivating behavior change for individuals whose reasons for pursuit were intrinsic (the pursuit as an end in itself); messages which focused on the value of the pursuit in meeting others’ expectations were more effective with individuals motivated by extrinsic values (e.g., the desire to successfully adjust to the constraints of one’s social environment).

Across a wide variety of behaviors, outcome efficacy is enhanced by person-situational congruence and attenuated when the person and the situation are incompatible. The current research extends the match-mismatch hypothesis to gambling scenarios varying in the specific emotions they induce. The general hypothesis is that the disharmony of a mismatch between a gambler’s emotional temperament and the sensations induced by a particular setting is detrimental to decisions about gambling activities. Following the framework of degrees of mismatch proposed by Lawton (1999), it was expected that the harmful effects of a mismatch between temperament and environmental emotion would be more pronounced when the mismatch involves an environmental oversupply rather than an undersupply of an emotion relative to the trait level of emotion. Correspondence in human predispositions and environmental emotion is conducive to rational judgments about gambling. The congruency effects were examined across gambler sub-types (non-problem, low-risk of becoming problem, moderate risk and problem gamblers) defined by the Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI) developed by Ferris and Wynne (2001).

The match-mismatch hypothesis was tested on two outcome variables: restoration (psychological well-being) and estimates of the likelihood of gambling beyond planned levels (at-risk gambling intention). The match-mismatch conditions were defined by congruency along the emotional dimensions of arousal and pleasure. For each emotion dimension, a match is present when both the environmental impact across casino designs and trait emotion are both above or both below their respective median values. A mismatch is defined for each dimension when either the environmental impact is above the median and the trait is below the median, or vice versa.

It was expected that at-risk gambling intention would be higher for high levels of environmental arousal (EA) and environmental pleasure (EP), high levels of trait arousal (TA) and trait pleasure (TP), and for a mismatch between EA and TA and between EP and TP. The mismatch effect was expected to be more pronounced when the environmental emotion exceeded the trait emotion (e.g., EA exceeds TA). Those main effects and interactions were expected to be mirrored in the restoration measures with the exception that higher restoration, which is a state of positive well-being, should occur for the harmonious match (EA and TA; EP and TP) conditions rather than mismatch conditions. The effects in the matched conditions were expected to be more pronounced when the supply of environmental emotion was high.

METHOD

Participants

A sample of 484 gamblers (241 males) was recruited by posting signs near casinos, in malls, and at bars and restaurants in three southern Ontario cities located near casinos. The signs encouraged individuals who like to gamble to contact the researchers to arrange participation in the study. Each participant received $30 following their participation. A demographic questionnaire revealed that 63% of participants were below the age of 45, almost 30% ranged between the ages of 46-65 and 8% were older than 65 years. The majority (81%) worked full- or part-time; half held a high school diploma and half had pursued some form of higher education. Only 35% had one or more children living at home. The distribution of income was fairly rectangular across income categories in $10,000 increments ranging from <$15,000 to >$95,000. The percentages of each gambler type (indexed by CPGI) were 23% non-problem, 26% low-risk of becoming a problem gambler, 37% moderate risk, and 14% problem gamblers.

Stimuli

The target stimuli were video simulations of casinos. Simulated scenarios have been shown to capture psychologically relevant processes (Bornstein, 1999). Stamps (1990) reported a meta-analysis of literature on how well preferences for photographs of environments correlate with preferences of environments. Across
1300 studies, an overall correlation of 86% was reported between preferences obtained in situ and preferences obtained through photographs. Video simulations are economical, feasible (access to gaming floors for research purposes is not permitted) and provide a reliable and valid approximation of the effects of the variables under study (Blomqvist, Luhtanen, Laakso, & Keskinen, 2000; Rohrmann & Bishop 2002).

The simulations used in this study were three-minute videos produced by professional videographers. The original taping occurred in locations within Las Vegas casinos identified as consistent with the playground (Kranes, 1995) or the gaming (Friedman, 2000) design. The representations intended to capture the two casino designs were distinctive primarily in their depiction of the slot machine areas of casinos; constant across the videos was footage of table areas (30% of each video) that was included to enhance authenticity. The soundtrack (ambient casino sound) was identical for each video.

Procedure

Participants were tested in small groups (3-10) in a mini-theatre-style setting. They viewed both the playground and gaming design in counterbalanced order across sessions (no effects involving order were significant). Instructions asked participants to imagine themselves in the casino since they would later be asked to indicate their feelings in such a setting. After each video, the participants completed several scales measuring their likelihood of gambling beyond planned levels (at-risk gambling intentions), impact of environmental emotion (pleasure and arousal), and restoration (McKechnie, 1977). After viewing and rating both videos, participants completed scales measuring their pleasure and arousal temperaments, gambling sub-type (Ferris & Wynne, 2001), and demography.

The environmental pleasure (EP) and arousal (EA) scales (Mehrabian & Wixen, 1986) required respondents to indicate their responses to six bipolar adjectives using a 7-point interval scale. Sample adjective pairs measuring pleasure are “annoyed-pleased” and “melancholic-contented”; items measuring arousal included “relaxed-stimulated” and “sluggish-frenzied.” Coefficient $\alpha$ for pleasure and arousal was .85 and .78, respectively.

The restoration scale (McKechnie, 1977) consists of eight items including “spending time here gives me a break from my day-to-day routine” and “this place is a refuge from unwanted distractions.” Each item is rated for level of agreement on a 7-point scale. At-risk gambling intention was measured with five items: I would probably bet or play more than I wanted to at this place; I would get drawn into other types of games I did not intend to play at this place; I would have an uncontrollable urge to bet a lot of money at this place; I would have trouble quitting without placing one more bet at this place; I would probably regret betting money at this place when I think about it later. Participants indicated their level of agreement to each statement using a 7-point scale. Alpha coefficients for restoration and gambling intention were .86 and .93, respectively.

The pleasure temperament (TP) scale (Mehrabian, 1996) contains 22 bi-polar adjective pairs. Participants indicate the degree to which their temperament corresponds with the adjective pairs by designating a number on the 9-point scale. Sample items assessing pleasure are “angry...interested,” “scornful...happy,” “cruel...happy,” and “hateful...interested.” Trait arousal (TA) (Mehrabian, 1996) is measured on a 9-point scale anchored to indicate strength of agreement (1 very weak, 9 very strong) with 16 statements (e.g., “when I get stirred up, my heart beats fast and keeps on beating for a while” and “I tend to relive exciting emotional episodes over and over again”). Coefficient $\alpha$ for TP and TA was .85 and .78, respectively.

The Canadian Problem Gambling Index (Ferris & Wynne, 2001) consists of nine items (coefficient $\alpha=86$) identifying four subtypes of gamblers: no problem; low risk; moderate risk; problem. Respondents indicate they “never” (scored 0 points), “sometimes” (scored 1 point), “most of the time” (scored 2 points), “almost always” (scored 3 points) or “don’t know” to questions such as, “has your gambling caused any financial problems for you or your household?”, and “have you borrowed money or sold anything to get money to gamble?” CPGI scores range from 0 (indicated “never” for all 9 questions) to 27 (indicated “almost always” for all 9 questions). Non-problem gamblers have a total score of 0; low-risk gamblers have scores of 1 or 2; moderate-risk gamblers have scores ranging between 3 and 7; and problem gamblers score 8 or higher.

RESULTS

To validate that the casino designs impacted situational emotion, the mean scores on environmental pleasure (EP) and arousal (EA) were subjected to separate one-way ANOVAs with casino design as the independent variable. The playground design was rated higher on pleasure ($M=4.80$, $SD=1.20$) than was the gaming design ($M=4.20$, $SD=1.30$), $F(1, 474)=20.22$, $p<.001$. Arousal ratings were higher for the playground design ($M=4.77$, $SD=1.02$) than for the gaming design ($M=4.52$, $SD=1.16$), $F(1, 474)=110.50$, $p<.001$.

Four separate analyses focused on the mismatch hypothesis. The analyses differed as to the dependent measure (at-risk gambling intention or restoration) and the emotion (arousal or pleasure). Each of those analyses was conducted as a 2 x 2 x 2 x 4 (Design x Environment Emotion x Trait Emotion x CPGI) mixed ANOVA with Design as the repeated measure variable. The levels of the environment and trait factors for pleasure and arousal were defined by a median split. The median values for EA, EP, TA, and TP were 4.58, 4.50, 4.50, and 5.41, respectively.

Arousal Effects on At-risk Gambling Intention

The analysis of at-risk gambling intention scores yielded significant (alpha=.05) main effects of Design, CPGI, and EA. At-risk gambling intention was higher for the playground design ($M=3.75$, $SD=1.88$) than for the gaming design ($M=3.25$, $SD=1.80$), $F(1, 462)=47.79$, $p<.001$. At-risk gambling intention increased across the four levels of CPGI: non-problem ($M=2.55$, $SD=1.47$); low-risk ($M=3.01$, $SD=1.56$); moderate-risk ($M=3.90$, $SD=1.56$); and, problem ($M=4.56$, $SD=1.75$), $F(1, 462)=34.38$, $p<.001$. The main effect of EA showed that individuals who rated casino environments lower in arousal provided a lower estimate of at-risk gambling intentions ($M=3.05$, $SD=1.61$) than did those who rated casino environments higher in arousal ($M=3.96$, $SD=1.71$), $F(1, 462)=38.62$, $p<.001$.

The main effect of TA on at-risk gambling intentions was not significant but the Design x TA interaction was significant, $F(1, 462)=4.72$, $p=.03$. TA affected at-risk gambling intentions for the playground design (high arousal $M=3.96$, $SD=1.95$; low arousal $M=3.55$, $SD=1.78$), $t(477)=2.25$, $p<.03$, but not for the gaming design (high arousal $M=3.29$, $SD=1.89$; low arousal $M=3.22$, $SD=1.69$), $t(482)=0.45$, $p=.65$.

Although the TA x EA interaction was not significant ($F<1$), the Design x TA x EA interaction was reliable, $F(1, 462)=4.15$, $p=.04$. The interaction is profiled in Figure 1. To probe the interaction, the simple effect of EA was tested at each level of TA in each design. All four simple effects were significant. For the playground
design, low TA participants had higher at-risk intentions in the mismatching high EA ($M=4.04, SD=1.80$) than in the matching low EA ($M=3.06, SD=1.65$), $t(475)=3.29, p<.001$; in contrast, high TA participants had higher at-risk intentions for the matching high EA ($M=4.30, SD=1.75$) than for the mismatching low EA ($M=3.61, SD=1.79$), $t(475)=3.73, p<.001$. For the gaming design, low TA participants had higher at-risk intentions in the mismatching high EA ($M=3.62, SD=1.03$) than in the matching low EA ($M=2.82, SD=1.62$), $t(479)=2.89, p<.001$; in contrast, high TA participants had higher at-risk intentions for the matching high EA ($M=3.87, SD=1.05$) than for the mismatching low EA ($M=2.71, SD=1.51$), $t(479)=7.30, p<.001$. The interaction reflects the relative magnitudes of the mismatch effects for the two designs. The greater at-risk intentions in the mismatch than match conditions for low TA participants is roughly equivalent for the playground ($M_{difference}=0.98$) and gaming ($M_{difference}=0.80$) designs. However, the extent to which at-risk intentions in the match exceeded that in the mismatch conditions for high TA participants was larger for the gaming design ($M_{difference}=1.16$) than for the playground design ($M_{difference}=0.69$).

The analysis of at-risk gambling intention also produced a significant Design x CPGI x TA interaction, $F(3, 462)=3.03, p=.03$. Figure 2 indicates that the source of the interaction is the differential effect of high versus low TA on at-risk gambling intentions for the playground design for moderate-risk (high TA: $M=4.54, SD=1.76$; low TA: $M=3.87, SD=1.80$), $t(174)=2.73, p<.03$, and problem gamblers (high TA: $M=5.44, SD=1.32$; low TA: $M=4.31, SD=1.91$), $t(68)=3.45, p<.001$. While the influence of gambler type was also indicated for the gaming design, the discrepancy of effect for the two levels of TA was weaker. For moderate-risk gamblers viewing the gaming design, high TA intentions ($M=3.57, SD=1.89$) did not differ from low TA intentions ($M=3.61, SD=1.79$), $t(176)=0.03, p>.75$; for problem gamblers, intentions were higher for high TA ($M=4.51, SD=1.84$) than for low TA ($M=3.96, SD=1.56$), $t(68)=2.21, p<.03$. Differences between high and low TA were not significant for non-problem or low-risk gamblers for both the playground and the gaming designs.

**Pleasure Effects on At-risk Gambling Intention**

In addition to the main effects of Design and CPGI, the analysis of EP scores yielded a main effect on at-risk gambling intention, $F(1, 462)=13.83, p<.001$. High EP led to higher ratings of at-risk gambling intention ($M=3.83, SD=1.79$) than did low EP ($M=3.26, SD=1.80$). The main effect and interactions involving TP did not significantly affect at-risk gambling intentions.
Arousal Effects on Restoration

There were significant main effects of Design, $F(1, 466)=107.14, p<.01$, and CPGI, $F(1, 466)=17.31, p<.03$, on restoration. Restoration was higher for the playground design ($M=4.71, SD=1.28$) than for the gaming design ($M=4.01, SD=1.25$). Restoration increased across CPGI categories: non-problem ($M=3.93, SD=1.19$); low-risk ($M=4.06, SD=1.04$); moderate-risk ($M=4.36, SD=1.34$); and problem ($M=5.00, SD=1.32$). The main effects of TA and EA on restoration were not significant; no interactions involving the four independent variables were significant.

Pleasure Effects on Restoration

The main effect of EP on restoration was significant, $F(1, 467)=126.27, p<.001$. Restoration was higher for high levels of EP ($M=4.86, SD=1.02$) than for low levels of EP ($M=3.86, SD=1.19$). Restoration is a positive state of psychological well-being; therefore, restoration was expected to be higher when there was a match between the levels of trait and state emotion. Whereas the TP main effect was not significant, the TP x EP interaction approached significance, $F(1, 466)=3.68, p<.06$. For high EP, restoration was higher when TP and EP matched ($M=5.02, SD=1.05$) than when TP and EP did not match ($M=4.71, SD=1.14$), $t(251)=2.41, p<.02$. For low EP, the match ($M=3.87, SD=1.19$) and mismatch ($M=3.84, SD=1.25$) conditions did not differ significantly, $t(228)=0.22, p=.82$.

The four-way Design x CPGI x EP x TP interaction effect on restoration was significant, $F(1, 467)=2.46, p<.04$ (Figure 3). As the focus of the research was on the trait-state emotional mismatch hypothesis, the simple effects of EP were examined at each level of TP for each of the eight conditions defined by crossing the four CPGI levels and two types of casino design. Twelve of the 16 simple effects of EP were significant (we used adjusted alpha=.01). The non-significant exceptions were: non-problem gamblers for the playground design when TP was low (top left panel for the playground design, Figure 3); problem gamblers for the playground design when TP was high (bottom right panel for the playground design); problem gamblers for the gaming design both when TP was high and TP was low (bottom right panel for the gaming design).

The pattern of the significant effects of trait-state congruence on restoration was similar across the two casino designs for non-problem gamblers (non-problem, low risk, moderate risk). The data in Figure 3 show that for the non-problem gamblers there is greater restoration for congruency in TP and EP when TP is high; in contrast, restoration is greater for incongruency when TP is low. The mean congruency effect (difference in scores between match
and mismatch conditions) when TP was high was 1.41 for the playground design and 1.31 for the gaming design. When TP was low, the mean incongruency effect (difference in scores between mismatch and match conditions) was .69 for the playground design and 1.00 for the gaming design.

The pattern of congruency effects for problem gamblers depended on casino design. For the playground design when TP was low, restoration was significantly higher in the mismatch condition ($M=5.43$, $SD=.57$) than in the match condition ($M=4.28$, $SD=1.42$), $F(1, 35)=10.94$, $p<.002$. When TP was high, there was
no difference between the match ($M=5.80, SD=.87$) and the mismatch condition ($M=5.20, SD=1.09$), $F (1, 31)=2.48, p=.13$. Neither of the simple effects of EP was significant for low TP or high TP for the gaming design: low TP participants mismatch condition ($M=4.75, SD=1.17$) versus match condition ($M=4.30, SD=1.21$), $F (1, 35)=1.27, p<=.27$; high TP participants match condition ($M=5.16, SD=.97$) versus mismatch condition ($M=4.45, SD=1.18$), $F (1, 31)=2.48, p=.13$.

**DISCUSSION**

Casino designs influence gambling intentions and state emotions. Relative to the gaming design, the playground design consistently generates higher levels of EP, EA and restoration. At-risk gambling intentions were higher for the playground design than for the gaming design. At-risk gambling intention is a negatively-valued construct indexed by estimates of exceeding planned levels of spending and time. Restoration, on the other hand, is a positive construct related to an individual’s psychological well-being. Consistent with findings from the environmental psychology literature (Kahana et al., 2003; Lawton, 1999), higher levels of maladaptive behaviors (at-risk gambling intentions) were hypothesized to occur when environmental and trait emotions mismatched, particularly when there was an oversupply of environmental emotion. Higher levels of beneficial influences (e.g., restoration), on the other hand, were expected under emotional match conditions, particularly when there was a high level of positive emotion in the setting.

There was no significant effect of congruency between EP and TP on at-risk intentions. Design moderated the EA x TA relationship for at-risk gambling intentions. When TA was low, the oversupply of EA versus TA (mismatch) resulted in higher at-risk intentions than when EA and TA matched. This difference was significant and of equivalent magnitude for the playground and the gaming designs. This mismatch may have been associated with greater anxiety, fewer coping skills, and more dysfunctional at-risk gambling intentions. In contrast, when TA was high, the match condition (high EA and TA) motivated significantly higher at-risk intentions than the mismatch condition (undersupply of EA). The magnitude of this difference was greater for the gaming design than for the playground design. The gaming design inherently generates lower levels of EA than the playground design. When an undersupply of arousal is experienced in an environment, it appears that gamblers may be less sensitive to trait-state incongruity due to the low salience of EA. High EA appears to be a necessary condition for the mismatch effect predicted by the trait-state congruence hypothesis.

The effect of TA also depended on gambler sub-type. Moderate-risk and problem gamblers with high TA indicated a higher likelihood of gambling beyond planned levels for the playground design. These individuals are most vulnerable in an environment characterized by high arousal.

Trait-state congruency involving arousal did not affect restoration scores. Both casino design and gambler sub-type moderated the influence of trait-state pleasure congruency on restoration. The pattern of effects depended on whether a gambler was categorized as a problem gambler versus a gambler without a serious gambling problem (non-problem, low risk, moderate risk). For gamblers without a serious gambling problem, the influence of trait-state pleasure congruence on restoration was similar to the effect of arousal congruence on at-risk gambling intentions. When TP was low, an oversupply of EP (mismatch) resulted in higher restoration scores than when EP was low (match). The magnitude of the difference between pleasure mismatch and match conditions was larger for the playground design than for the gaming design. When TP was high, restoration was higher when TP and EP matched than when there was an undersupply of EP. This difference was of approximately the same magnitude for both designs.

For problem gamblers, on the other hand, no significant differences in restoration reported between the match and mismatch condition except when TP was low for the playground design. Problem gamblers are significantly less sensitive than non-problem gamblers to an undersupply of EP. The trait-state congruence hypothesis appears to have no relevance to problem gamblers unless they prefer to experience low pleasure and find themselves in a less pleasing environment.

Taken together, the current results for at-risk gambling intentions and restoration indicate several boundary conditions on the match-mismatch hypothesis in the context of gambling environments. Effects appear to be dependent on the outcome being measured (restoration, at-risk gambling intentions), the casino design (playground, gaming), the dimension of emotion (arousal, pleasure), the pole of the emotion (high, low), and gambler sub-type (non-problem, low risk, moderate risk, problem). Limits to the hypothesis have been identified for other positive outcome variables similar to restoration. For example, Casten, Lawton, Winter, Kleban and Sando (1997) reported that self-perceptions of health among residents of Elderhostels were associated with state positive affect (EP) but not with trait positive affect (TP). Ratings of one’s health were higher when there was trait-state mismatch rather than, as expected, when there was a match.

The documentation of these complex relationships provides a framework for intervention and counselling. Gamblers need to assess their personal preference for pleasure and arousal emotions and be conscious of their vulnerabilities related to variations in casino design.

**REFERENCES**


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

When the principles of commercial marketing were introduced to social change management in 1970s the concept of social marketing emerged. Since then, the success/failure of social marketing programs has been debated. That success should not be based solely on awareness and attitude shift assessment but on behavior change, has increasing academic and practitioner acceptance. Though behavior is the final objective of social programs, tools to diagnose and to direct behavior change strategies are few. Rothschild (1999) proposed a diagnostic framework based on motivation, opportunity and ability to argue and argued that change strategies can be based on education programs, regulation and incentives. This paper accepts the logic of Rothschild’s approach but argues that his framework needs refining and extending. An argument for the refinement of Rothschild’s and a diagnostics/ strategic framework drawn from the diffusion of innovations theory that extends Rothschild’s framework is presented.

Though social marketing practitioners point to successful campaigns, since the 1980’s a substantial number of practitioners and academics have pointed out that many social marketing programs have failed and that social marketing as a concept and a practice would benefit from critical discourse (Flay et al., 1987; Griching and Barber 1987, cited in Barber, Bradshaw and Walsh 1989; Morehead and Penman 1989; Baumann et al., 1991; Elliot 1991; Murray, Prokhorov and Harty 1994; Champion et al., 1994; Andreasen 1997; Maibach et al., 1997; Lefebvre 1997; Rothschild 1999; Hae-Kyong Bang 2000; McKenzie-Mohr 2000; Wellings and Macdowall 2000; Curtis et al., 2001; Agha and van Rossem 2002; Andreasen 2002; Crane and Desmond 2002; Clapp et al., 2003; Wechsler et al. 2003; Thombs et al., 2004; Rossiter and Bellman 2005). The reasons given for the failure are multifarious. Hastings and Elliott (1993) and Foxall (2002), argue that much of the problem lies with the assumption that the 4P paradigm can be applied to social marketing endeavours. Rothschild (1999) contended that social marketing practice did not incorporate marketing theory or practice and Andreasen (2002) argued that social marketing is in a stage of uncertainty and that substantive debate among academics is minimal. He attributed this to the fact that despite its ‘ivory tower’ origin, much of the growth in research and writing over subsequent years emerged out of field experiences and practitioner needs.

The focus on behavior has influenced practitioners such as Prose and McKenzie-Mohr to promote the notion of community based social marketing (CBSM). The questions- ‘Whodowewant to take action? What do we want them to do? Why might they do it or not do it- the barriers? How can we affect the barriers?’, underpin the CBSM approach and the notion that the barriers to the behavior change should be assessed before strategies/tactics are developed accepted.

Rothschild’s Carrots, Stick, Promises approach to assessing barriers has gained wide acceptance. Rothschild (1999) suggested that resistance to behavior change can be assessed by applying the Motivation, Opportunity and Ability (MOA) model of information processing proposed by Maclnnis, Moorman, and Jaworski (1991). The MOA model focuses on understanding an audience’s motivation, opportunity and ability to process the message delivered and Rothschild suggests that the propensity to engage in the desired behavior change is a function of the target’s motivation to adopt the behavior and the opportunity and ability to do so. Once this is assessed, Rothschild suggests that a campaign with the appropriate mix of education, law (the regulation of behavior) and marketing (promises in the form of incentives) can be applied to elicit the desired behavior. According to Rothschild, if motivation is present and the individual has the opportunity and ability to behave then education would be sufficient to elicit the desired behavior. If motivation and ability are high and opportunity low, then law (regulation) comes into play. His framework however does not allow the recognition of the need to manage (create or remove) structural conditions nor to provide strategies to cope with situations such as the resistance to condom use described in the work of Cohen et al. (1999) and Agha and van Rossen (2002). In this instance, motivation to use condoms is low, opportunity (availability of condoms) is high and ability to use also high. According to Rothschild’s framework the best strategy would involve regulation. However given the nature of the behavior required it is difficult to see how regulation could be implemented.

To address the limitations of Rothschild’s framework this paper argues that the framework could be improved by incorporating elements used to assess and manage innovation resistance. A diagnostic formula to gauge the propensity of the target market to adopt an innovation was first proposed by Ram and Sheth (1989) and refined by others and Rogers (1995) into Relative Advantage, Compatibility, Complexity and, Observability. These four factors have been incorporated into Rothschild’s framework (Figure 1). Compatibility and Relative Advantage, because of their basis in values and benefits would have a bearing on the motivation to adopt the behavior. Complexity and trialability would affect the individual’s ability to adopt the behavior. Observability can facilitate adoption via vicarious learning and under conditions where the behavior has status implications. It can also have a direct impact on whether or not regulation is feasible since public acts are more easily policed than private acts.

In addition to the innovation characteristics, a factor labeled Impediments has been incorporated and directly linked to opportunity in line with Roger’s focus on the social context and Rothschild’s explanations for the factors that affect the individual’s opportunity to act. Impediments can take two forms-structural and legal (current regulations). Structural represents the existence of socio-economic conditions that either sustain or restrain the behavior, such as available products (goods or services). Rothschild’s three tools, though included, have been adjusted. Rothschild separates communication and marketing and his interpretation links the process of social marketing to three of the 4P’s and does not present a clear demarcation between social and commercial marketing. The framework presented in Figure 1 views the availability of products as a structural condition which is essentially managed via commercial marketing and the cost-benefit factor as influencing the degree of relative advantage perceived. Communication and incentives are presented as the marketing tools. The law tool has been retained and training added as often new behaviors require direction and/or the addition of new skills.

References


FIGURE 1
Social Marketing Programs: Proposed diagnostic framework


All Cause-Related Advertisements Are Not Created Equal: Influences of Product Characteristics and Donation Framing on Consumer Purchase Decision
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been prompted both by companies that increasingly recognize it as a key to success and by nonprofits that have increasing needs for resources and funding. CSR initiatives include various forms of company involvement with charitable causes and nonprofits that represent them (Lichtenstein, Drumwright, and Braig, 2004). One dimension of CSR is the partnering of a product with a cause, referred to as cause-related marketing (CRM). It has become a major corporate philanthropic activity to donate money to a charity each time a consumer makes a purchase over a promotion period (Varadarajan and Menon, 1988). Extended from previous research (Strahilevitz and Myers, 1998; Strahilevitz, 1999; Subrahmanyan, 2004), the objective of present study is to investigate potential influences associated with donation framing, donation magnitude, product price, and product type on CRM effectiveness (i.e., the effectiveness of using promised donations to charity as purchase incentives) in advertising contexts.

An experiment was designed to test the relative effectiveness of ad messages to promote products on CRM in a 2 (donation framing: absolute dollar value vs. relative percentage of a sale price) X 2 (product price: low vs. high) X 2 (product type: frivolous vs. practical) X 2 (donation magnitude: low vs. high) mixed design. Product type and donation framing were selected to be between-subjects variables, and product price and donation/cash discount magnitude were operationalized as within-subjects variables. Participants consisted of 217 part-time undergraduate students (95 males and 122 females) from seven evening courses across a variety of disciplines at four large universities in Taiwan. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions above. In order to eliminate the effects of product-selection bias, two products were chosen for each product type (frivolous vs. practical) based on a pre-test. Shampoo, toilet paper, color ink jet printer, and desktop computer were chosen as practical products with the first two items as less expensive and the other two as more expensive. Compact discs containing with classical music, and printer, and desktop computer were chosen as practical products respectively.

After successful manipulation checks, a series of analysis of variance were conducted to examine proposed hypotheses. A four-way interaction effect of product type, donation magnitude, donation framing and product price was not found on participants’ choices with F<1. Likewise, three-way interaction effects were not found over any combination of these four variables. However, four two-way interaction effects and all four main effects were observed. In line with previous studies, main effects of product type and donation magnitude were found. The main effect of donation framing was also found to be significant. Participants preferred donations framed in absolute dollar terms to relative percentage of a sale price. Yet interestingly, a two-way interaction between donation framing and product type was observed. The effects of charity incentive in absolute dollar terms were stronger in promoting frivolous products than in promoting practical ones. Strahilevitz’s results (1999) are held for the conditions of donation framed in absolute dollars, but not for those conditions of donation presented in relative percentage of a sale price. A significant two-way interaction also occurred between donation framing and donation magnitude. To be specific, when the donation magnitude was low, the amount framed in absolute dollars was more effective than that in a relative percentage. However, framing effects of donation amount were significant when the magnitude appeared to be large. A significant main effect of product price was found. Compared with low-priced items, participants preferred a charity-linked product to a cash discount when the product price was lower. More importantly, a two-way interaction between product price and product type was significant. Higher product price weakened the effects of product type on CRM especially when the product was frivolous. Finally, a two-way interaction between product price and donation magnitude was revealed. Compared with products with a low magnitude of donation/discount, those with a high magnitude of donation/discount significantly reduced participants’ willingness to purchase the product with a cause when the price increased.

The present study raises concerns over possible ineffectiveness of CRM when bundled with products of certain types (i.e., frivolous products) and when offered at certain donation magnitudes (i.e., higher levels of magnitudes). Theoretical and practical contributions to CRM, consumer purchase decision-making, and marketing practice can be drawn. It is important to go beyond simple demonstrations of the effects of product type and to clarify when a particular cause-related promotion is likely to be observed, reversed, or eliminated with considerations of factors from product characteristics and donation framing. Marketers should present a donation amount clearly in CRM campaigns. How the price effects of a promoted product interacts with product type and donation magnitude offer further useful implications for marketers who seek to optimize the effectiveness of cause-related campaigns.

References
Towards an Understanding of Consumption Objectors
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ABSTRACT
This article studies the topic of meaning in consumption practices that are related to the critics of consuming society. In a postmodern world characterized by symbolism in consumption and a global “crisis of meanings”, a deep critical posture of consuming society is studied through its contribution to identity construction processes among “very responsible” consumers whom we refer to as “consumption objectors.” An interpretative analysis of fourteen narratives from forty interviews enables us to enter into the details of the meanings given by these consumers to their consumption by studying how they construct their identity. Through this analysis, the article shows that all consumption objectors have a certain set of common features: quest for authenticity, social integration, control, suffer and the sensation of compromise.

INTRODUCTION
During the past few years, many spectacular actions and events have been taken by individuals and groups aiming to raise public awareness about consumption. For instance, the tires of sports utility vehicles, targeted for their polluting effects, have been deflated. Advertising posters have been vandalized to denounce their disrespect of consumers. Mountains of packaging have been abandoned in supermarkets. Feasts such as burning man or buy nothing day have been organized to demonstrate against the frenzy of consumption.

The discourse has also changed: individuals are encouraged not to reject the whole economic system blindly, but rather to limit their consumption (Firat and Venkatesh 1995), to think more about their purchases, to adopt solutions that encourage sustainable development. Consumers are advised to become more responsible so that they have "the set of voluntary acts, situated in the sphere of consumption, achieved from the awareness of consequences judged as negatives of consumption from the outside world to oneself; these consequences arising therefore not from the functionality of the purchases nor from immediate personal interest" (Ozcaglar-Toulouse 2005, 52). Some consumers however, do not limit their actions to the conservation of the planet, but are very critical of consumption and the place that it now occupies in the Western lifestyle. Therefore, we will call them consumption objectors. How can one define these consumption objectors?

Consumption objection is not a complete negation of consumption; its promoters are convinced that consumption can also become beneficial when it allows the development of communities as in the case of fair trade (Ozcaglar-Toulouse, Shiu, and Shaw 2006). In the field of responsible consumption, consumption objection can be distinguished according to its aim as a consuming act. It is not an act of moral conformity. As a deep critical posture, the message of consumption objection can derive either from political essence or from a desire for liberation of the consuming society. Consumption objection has a global vision of the world that one should protect, and which should be recognized by the individuals who have their role in the project of a new society.

Various interpretations can be made of consumption objectors. Historians will underline, for example, that this is not the first time that consumers have made their voices heard. Even during the Middle Ages, consumers were already protesting against the abuses of the traders; and in the 19th century they organized themselves in cooperatives (Chatriot, Chessel, and Hilton 2004). Sociologists will evoke the symbolic character of consumption objection as behavior or the rejection of alienation that its symbolic character denotes among consumers (Groupe Marcuse 2004). In marketing, a number of studies have investigated the strategies of consumer resistance such as Peñaloza and Price (1992), Thompson and Haytko (1997), Kozinets and Handelman (1998), Holt (2002). But probably the most interesting reading of consumption objectors, as it is the most contemporary one, consists in considering the attempt these individuals make to give a meaning to their consumption and include the latter as an element of their identity construction. This will be discussed later in this article.

CRISIS IN MEANING WITHIN THE WESTERN SOCIETIES
According to many philosophers and sociologists, Western consumers are going through a deep crisis driven by a search for some meaning, at least because of two reasons: the crisis of modernity on one hand and the loss of social significance on the other.

Western society, while leaving modernity (e.g. “The crisis of the modernity” from Alain Touraine 1992), has abandoned the project of a society turned towards the future and left individuals alone to get rid of their fears resulting from micro and macro social risks (Giddens 1990). Multiple social risks ranging from the ever-increasing difficulty to attain satisfaction in spite of a growing number of available goods and services, environmental deterioration, and risks to future generations resulting from limited natural resources, troubling economic instabilities and the persistence of famines and wars, are now internalized by individuals. Since society doesn’t know how to provide a suitable answer to these issues, the individual needs to find them by himself. The quest for identity can be part of this.

Every society creates its own world by creating elements of meaning. These elements structure the representations that one has of the world, identifying social norms and indicating the type of affects that reign in society. According to Castoriadis (1996), the unique representation communicated by Western Society is the image of a man who earns more to consume more. Not all consumers recognize themselves in this model. But as for the individual who refuses this representation, the search for uniqueness becomes difficult due to the fear and awkwardness of stepping outside the borders of society (Fromm 1976). Hence, the individual must give himself another social identity than the one proposed by society and adopt a critical approach towards consumption.

So far, search for the personal identity and search for a social identity both seem to be at work in the consumption objector’s mind. This suggests that identity could be a relevant concept to explore consumption objectors. The link between identity and consumption has long been investigated in academic marketing research since the first work of Levy (1959) about consumption symbolism (e.g., Belk 1988; Schouten 1991; etc.). The most recent studies adopt a hermeneutic perspective that provides the personalized cultural meanings that constitute a person’s sense of self-identity (Thompson 1997).
GENERATING NARRATIVES FROM CONSUMPTION OBJECTORS

In order to delve in a phenomenological way into the thoughts and feelings which the informants hold about the significance of consumption in their daily lives, a research method that relies on the propensity of people to talk about the social experience of their daily lives was selected. Consumption objectors are not usual consumers and an appropriate research design had to be constructed, in order to by-pass the current distrust that propels consumers away from marketing studies. Offering the respondent at least a certain amount of autonomy not only in his/her answers but also in the organization of the interview was a better way to encourage cooperation with consumers (Fouquier 2004). Moreover, they are not in the habit of reflecting the meaning that they give to their consumption or the link that exists between their acts of purchase and their life. It therefore seemed necessary to “provoke” the consumers into speaking not only about their consumption but also about their own self-defined consumption story. This sort of compiling of information is not unknown in humanities or social science, where it is referred to as the method of “narratives” (Stern, Thompson, and Arnould 1998). The narratives method consists of asking the informant to tell his/her own story, with his/ her own words at his/her own pace.

Studying consumption from the story that the consumer tells about his/her life is a research strategy that allows us to combine objective phenomena and subjective experience to understand and to analyze “the act in situation” (Bertaux 2000). The narrative does not reflect the totality of what happened in reality: the setting in narration is the interesting aspect of the present research.

A database consisting of 800 consumers, which is stored from a former quantitative survey on responsible consumption performed by one of the researchers, was used to recruit the sample. Some of these consumers were selected along their “very responsible” characteristic. According to the qualitative research, people belonging to diverse groups and showing differentiated types of responsible consumption behavior were included progressively. Gender parity and diversity of socio-professional categories were taken into account as far as possible. In such interpretative studies, diversity is important to get different kind of meanings: six men and eight women, living in two cities in France, from different socio-professional categories constituted the sample.

Each narrator, except two of them, was interviewed three times in order to increase the richness of information, as advised in the narrative literature (Atkinson 2002). These interviews employ few pre-planned questions. The first interview was focused on general life span and lifestyle. The second one was focused on consumption meanings and the third one on objection modes of consumption. Forty interviews were realized during forty-five hours in which the narratives of fourteen consumers were transcribed on more than five hundred pages. These were supplemented by various notes taken during and after the interviews, observation of the phenomenon studied (participation to some Adbusters performance, shopping in alternative retailers, discussion on Community Supported Agriculture), factual data on the narrators, “sneaky” information, such as lifestyle indicators, captured during the interviews (Newholm 1999), etc.

IDENTITY THROUGH LIFE SPAN IN THE CONSUMPTION OBJECTORS’ NARRATIVES

Each story was first read in its entirety. Further readings were necessary to develop an integrated understanding of the consumption meanings (Thompson 1997). Many identity issues and concerns emerged during these interviews. For a better understanding we have chosen to present them according to a dynamic approach of identity. For a good part of two decades, the term of identity has given rise to a large amount of definitions in various social sciences and humanities and to an even larger amount of research. Social psychology, psychoanalytic tradition or sociology all can be involved in investigating consumer identity. We would like to focus on a dynamic perspective as narratives allow us to approach the transitions of self. Identity can be considered as the crossroads of five processes (Marc 2005): the process of individuation, the process of identification, the process of valorization, the process of conservation and finally the process of realization.

The process of individuation refers to the awareness of one’s uniqueness by differentiation. Terms like people, society, and mass market are very often used by consumption objectors to refer to others who are not. One respondent illustrates the desire and the process of individuation particularly well. Two years ago, Christelle, 41 years old, quit her job as a director of marketing for a large company because she felt she was too different from her colleagues (“I was the only one who was thinking about the consequences of marketing”). At one time, she was successful member of senior management, but she slightly realized she had little freedom and slowly felt she was going to be laid off. It was very painful and time consuming for her to realize this and to quit (“This events prevent me from sleeping”). Another one comments:

“I never feel myself to form part of a group completely. Because I have the feeling to have too many elements which do not correspond to a group”. (Magali, 25)

Sabine underlines her need to be different, to go always a little further:

“I raise my difference with pride. But, I think that I will be happy that everyone makes effort (on his/her consumption). Of course, I will nevertheless find something to go further.” (Sabine, 33)

The process of identification leads consumption objectors to constitute networks through the necessity to meet each other in order to better take on the responsibilities and alienation associated with their “marginal” behavior (Moisander 2000; Moisander and Pesonen 2002).

“I have also a feeling of community of thought or community with other people who can act like me.” (Laurent, 29)

Some of them are concerned about the environment and belong to ecological movements; some others are or were members of a political party. Many are engaged in charity or social NGOs such as OXFAM. At a more local level, they are concerned with their neighborhood life or their relation with local producers. In a more positive perspective:

“I find important also this direct relation with producers from the same area with me or even from outside of the area.”

The process of valorization. Consumption objection seems to be driven on one hand by the desire to do something “counter-cultural”, but on the other hand by a need for creativity. Moreover, certain attitudes such as responsible, critical or ethical consumption can be socially valued. For this reason, being critical of consumption can be considered positively by others and allow the individual to develop a positive perception of oneself. Most respondents express their pride in being consumption objectors, although they...
are conscious of being far from perfect and are reminded of sustainable development issues.

“When you buy a fair trade product, it is perhaps a political act but also, it enables you to be distinguished, or while buying you have the impression to belong to an avant-garde movement” (Magali, 25).

The process of conservation. For consumption objectors the autonomy they have to leave the culture of mass consuming society and create a subculture that practices consumption objection is fundamental. The process of conservation allows the construction of an identity with a larger temporal base (the concept of autonomy referring to the concept of control and continuity). Moreover, consumption objection generally is built on concepts such as sustainability and inter-generational continuity, which also relate to the notion of conservation.

“...to be autonomous, to know how foods are produced... as I know what awaits us in the future, to be autonomous, it is important and reassuring; in the future that will be vital.” (Mathias, 33)

The process of realization. For the narrators, consumption objection seems to compensate for the meaning of a world judged as unauthentic and for a disillusioned consumer society. As they do not wish to be reduced to their role of consumers, they view their critical stand as a way to address the possibility of being more a “person” than a simple consumer and to create an identity identifiable by others (Cherrier and Murray 2002).

“I have a little feeling to change the world by my consuming behavior.” (Mathias, 33)

These five processes are present on a different level in each narrative. Besides the identity aspects, many issues have emerged during the analysis of narratives. We have looked for patterns and differences across interviews.

EMERGING ISSUES

The comparative analysis has led us to find common features among the consumption objectors whose narratives we analyzed. Without falling into the trap of over-generalizing, we believe that any consumer who progressively moves towards critical thought about consumption and consumption objection practices may be confronted with these feelings. Cherrier (2005) has already been identified three of them. The quest for “authenticity” (1), “social integration” (2) and “control” (3), which are confirmed and deepened here. Two other features also appear in the data: “suffering” (4) and “compromise” (5).

Literature generally studies “authenticity” (1) through the study of product origins (Camus 2002). However the quest for authenticity by the consumption objectors goes beyond the purchase of specific products. The individual is in search of a “real自我” (Cova and Cova 2002) which he or she believes tends to disappear in consumer society, but could be partly recovered with consumption objection practices (“Mass consumption, it’s the consumption of ourselves!” one of the narrators says).

The consumption objectors’ acts - where the origin and the impact of the products (in social, environmental or political terms) have a major importance in the final consuming decision - are a way of opposing conformism.

Consumption objection allows a move away from an individual’s identity as “a consumer”, one which is banal and inherited from the disenchantment of the mass. It is about a self-referent identity labeling (Biddle et alii 1987 in Shaw 2000), which is above all the construction of “someone” identifiable by him/herself (Gergen 2000, in Cherrier and Murray 2002).

The “social integration” (2) is located at two different but complementary levels. The first one is related to the ‘imposed’ social norm (Moisander and Pesonen 2002; Craig-Lees and Hill 2002). Consumption objection is indeed for the narrators an ambitious stand against the current economic system, while at the same time their speech reflects some efforts to avoid dropping out of society (“I don’t want to be on the margins of society” one narrator says). The second level is related to the ‘desired’ social norm. In this view consumption objection is seen as a sum of practices (products to buy or to not buy), symbols (resistance, criticism) and beliefs, (“we can change the world!”) enabling the building of a new social community. Social integration is the expression of a quest for social links (Rieunier and Volle 2002) and relies on processes of valorization and identification. The valorization of oneself through consumption objection is related to the conviction of being part of an anti-conformist minority which is ahead of the rest of society. Our narrators often tend to define themselves in their opposition to the rest of the “mass” made up of drab and conventional consumers who are unable to oppose the system.

With a dual movement of identity, consumption objection is also the expression of the awareness of one’s likeness with others. It is essentially about a search for recognition, which means that a social identity is under construction. There is here a social aspect: the singular place that one occupies in a social group is not, therefore, appreciated only for itself, but in relation to others.

The “desire for control” (3) is based on a wish for autonomy and mastery. Having the impression of being directed by the art of marketers (Dobscha 1998), these consumption objectors want to regain control of their lives by “knowing where the products come from”. The desire for control implies a perception of oneself as an autonomous individual, able to self-determine, to construct a life by oneself, to decide one’s behavior, as well as to master oneself and the environment (Marc 2005).

Control is often related to a sense of urgency (Rieunier and Volle 2002). The adepts of consumption objection generally hold very strong environmental convictions, with the desire not to break the harmony of Mother Nature that develops the life and not to risk harming her. They are often fans of “DIY” (do it yourself) and try for example, to have their own vegetable garden, etc. (Dobre 2002).

“Suffering” (4) is both the expression of the difficulty to accept the values of the society we are living in and the negative impacts of our lifestyles, and of the difficulty to reconcile some values and types of behavior that seem hardly reconcilable (one of the narrators says: “[through my behavior] I feel guilty about letting the planet suffer”). Moreover, mass consumption leads, for some of the narrators, to a feeling of impoverishment. This suffering reminds us of the need to affirm one’s existence and the need to feel secure in the group. Consumption objection seems to attenuate it and allows the consumer to rediscover a sense of the world through his own life choices.

Suffering and, hence, anxiety highlight the need to affirm one’s existence, which is clearly linked with the need to feel safe within the group. The use of consumption objection allows the consumers to affirm his/her identity.

Finally, the practices of consumption objection are sometimes financially (purchase of more expensive or rarer products), socially (risks of isolation, need to convince one’s relations, social embarrassment of vegetarians, etc.) and time (finding alternative distribution networks, culinary preparations, etc.) demanding, since the
dominant model of the consuming society has been constructed through a modernist approach in total opposition to this behavior. This difficulty is especially daunting, as these consumers don’t wish to marginalize themselves too much or to step outside society. The adepts of consumption objection live their consumption as a set of “compromises” (5) with other people between their desire for social integration (“I am not either a rebel in total opposition with the rest of the society!”) and themselves. As a result, the practices of consumption objection are not always feasible or easy to carry out (“The other guy, the one who consumes in the standard way, is also the other half of myself” recognizes one of the speakers).

In this context each one adopts a variety of practices according to the situation or one’s arguments, and sometimes according to one’s capacity for “resistance”. There are three main ways of expressing this compromise: through voluntary simplicity, through the renunciation of possessiveness and through the acceptance of a certain level of fragmentation to avoid dropping-out.

Compromise corresponds to a certain paradox of identity. On one hand it results from the need for valorization. In the quest for recognition, each one expects to be given a certain value, a positive image of him, sent back by others. Self-esteem is often bound to the image of him, sent back by others. Self-esteem is often bound to the consideration of others (Marc 2005). On the other hand, compromising with the system weakens the identity construction of consumption objectors since it makes them question the strength of their convictions and their capacity to carry through their commitment without contradiction.

CONCLUSION

The consumption process has been considered as a destruction process by economists for a long period of time, then as a way to fulfill needs and desires. Recently it has been identified as an addiction for some individuals (Valence, D’Aoust and Fortier 1988). The research related here emphasizes another function of consumption: one that contributes to a great extent to self-construction, at least for consumption objectors. This function is not really a new one, as symbolic aspects of consumption have long been investigated. But yet, the role played in self-construction has been limited to certain products (such as luxury goods or cars) or practices (cosmetic surgery). In the case of consumption objectors, paradoxically, any consumption act contributes as a whole to this self-construction. But instead of a biological reduction of the tension created by need, consumption can lead to greater tension (the necessity to compromise), discomfort and even suffering. Therefore, a new way of developing fair and ethical consumption could be to find a means to release this suffering.

These results have emerged from a small group of consumption objectors and can not be extended either to consumers as a whole or to occasionally responsible consumers who sometimes purchase ethical and fairly traded products. In any case these results do provide a new approach to consumption objectors and suggest that a self-construction process is at work. It would be of great help to know if such a process is also at work in the case of individuals who are less concerned than consumption objectors, but still feel the need to buy “ethical products” or engage in other responsible consumption practices. These results could allow a better communication program for the development of responsible consumption among this less involved consumer group. Moreover, the narrative approach used in this study has proven to be productive for analyzing consumption meaning and could be extended to other related subjects. In particular, such a methodological strategy could be used in cross-cultural consumption research as one’s life path is linked to the economic and political context of each country as well as to one’s personality. Building large cross-cultural research programs could be one of the next possible steps in international consumption research for the investigation of the consumption objection.

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**EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

Creative ad execution strategies to engage audience attention include sex, novelty, humor, contrast, fear, music, animation, and celebrity endorsers. While all of these have been used frequently, none has garnered as much controversy as sexual appeals. Advertisers seem to rely on the adage “Sex Sells”. However, both practitioners as well as academic researchers report mixed results with some studies finding that such appeals are effective and others finding that they are ineffective. The objective of this research is to explore the effectiveness of sexual and nonsexual appeals under conditions of high versus low involvement and high versus low NFC.

Consistent with the predictions of ELM, consumers who are high in involvement are likely to follow the central route to persuasion and pay more attention to the message arguments as opposed to less relevant peripheral cues or executional elements. Indeed, powerful executional elements such as sexual appeals might serve as detractors. Hence, sex appeals might not be effective for high involvement consumers. However, low involvement consumers are less likely to pay attention to the central message arguments and less willing to expend the cognitive resources to engage in detailed processing. For such consumers, creative ad executions such as sexual appeals might enhance attention to the ad and engender persuasion through the peripheral route.

H1: Compared to low involvement consumers, high involvement consumers will engage in more in-depth processing of the ads (both sexual and nonsexual appeals) as evidenced by superior recall, more accurate recognition, and higher number of cognitive responses.

H2a: Compared to low involvement consumers, high involvement consumers will have higher Aad, Ab, and PI for nonsexual appeals.

H2b: Compared to high involvement consumers, low involvement consumers will have higher Aad, Ab, and PI for sexual appeals.

H3a: Low involvement consumers will exhibit more in-depth processing of sexual appeals compared to nonsexual appeals as evidenced by superior recall, more accurate recognition, and higher number of cognitive responses.

H3b: Low involvement consumers will have higher Aad, Ab, and PI for sexual appeals compared to nonsexual appeals.

NFC is defined as the “tendency for an individual to engage in and enjoy thinking.” NFC could moderate the effectiveness of an ad through its influence on the preferred style and amount of processing. High NFC consumers are more motivated to undertake effortful processing of messages while low NFC consumers might refrain from attending to and/or processing ad appeals. Hence, sexual appeals might be necessary to engage the attention of low NFC consumers. In contrast, high NFC consumers might not welcome such appeals as they could detract from the main message arguments.

H4: Compared to low NFC consumers, high NFC consumers will engage in more in-depth processing of the ads (both sexual and nonsexual appeals) as evidenced by superior recall, more accurate recognition, and higher number of cognitive responses.

H5a: Compared to low NFC consumers, high NFC consumers will have higher Aad, Ab, and PI for nonsexual appeals.

H5b: Compared to high NFC consumers, low NFC consumers will have higher Aad, Ab, and PI for sexual appeals.

H6a: Low NFC consumers, will exhibit more in-depth processing of sexual appeals compared to nonsexual appeals as evidenced by superior recall, more accurate recognition, and higher number of cognitive responses.

H6b: Low NFC consumers will have higher Aad, Ab, and PI for sexual appeals compared to nonsexual appeals.

Two independent studies (experiments) were undertaken to test the hypotheses. The stimulus material, positioned as a college magazine, composed of a ten-page excerpt containing a cover/instruction page, the two target ads, three filler ads, and four filler articles. The target ads (one sexual and one nonsexual) appeared on the fourth and eighth pages and were rotated to reduce order bias. The order was as follows: cover page, filler ad, filler article, target ad, filler article, filler ad, filler article, target ad, filler article, filler ad.

One hundred three undergraduate students (46 males and 57 females) participated in the first study. The respondents’ involvement with each of the product categories and issues listed in the excerpt were assessed on a single seven-point scale. The sample was divided into high and low groups based on a median split on involvement with fragrance. As predicted by H1 high involvement consumers had superior recall, more accurate recognition, and more cognitive responses than their low involvement counterparts. Also in line with H2a and b, high involvement respondents had higher Aad, Ab, and PI for nonsexual appeals compared to their low involvement counterparts whereas low involvement respondents had higher Aad, Ab, and PI for sexual appeals compared to those with high involvement. In line with H3a, a higher proportion of low involvement respondents recalled the sexual appeal and exhibited superior discrimination ability (recognition) for the sexual appeal. As predicted by H3b, low involvement consumers showed an affinity toward sexual appeals compared to nonsexual appeals as evidenced by higher scores on Aad, Ab, and PI.

Ninety nine undergraduate students (44 males and 55 females) participated in the second study. The subjects responded to Cacioppo, Petty, and Kao’s (1984) abbreviated 18-item NFC scale. The sample was divided into high and low groups based on a median split on the NFC scores. As predicted by H4, high NFC respondents had superior recall, more accurate recognition, and more cognitive responses than their low NFC counterparts. In line with H5a and b, high NFC respondents had higher Aad, Ab, and PI for nonsexual appeals compared to their low involvement counterparts whereas low NFC respondents had higher Aad, Ab, and PI for sexual appeals compared to those who were high in NFC. In line with H6a, a higher proportion of low NFC respondents recalled the sexual appeal, showed superior discrimination ability (recognition) for the sexual appeal, and generated more cognitive responses for sexual appeals compared to nonsexual appeals. As predicted by H6b, low NFC
consumers showed an affinity toward sexual appeals compared to nonsexual appeals as evidenced by higher scores on $A_{ad}$, $A_{b}$, and $P_i$.

The results suggest that sexual appeals lead to higher recall, better recognition, deeper processing, and superior attitudes and purchase intent when the audience has low involvement or low NFC. However, consumers who score high on involvement or NFC process both sexual and nonsexual ads more deeply and such consumers exhibit stronger attitudes and purchase intentions for nonsexual appeals.

References

Judging Fiction Books by the Cover: An Examination of the Effects of Sexually Charged Cover Images
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ABSTRACT

Book covers—a communication means with nebulous boundaries between an ad, a package, and the product itself—have received virtually no attention in research on communication effects. Here, this void is addressed by an examination of one frequently employed front cover design practice—the juxtaposition of a sexually charged image, the book’s title and the author’s name. An experimental approach, involving two fiction books, showed that (a) the presence of cover images with sexual content affected customers’ beliefs about the books’ sexual content and (b) such beliefs contributed to a sense-making process involving emotions, attitudes, and intentions to read the book.

INTRODUCTION

Publishers are increasingly concerned with the cover design of fiction books in an era in which fiction is the subject of mass-marketing methods. Many cover genres exist, such as the classical text-only cover, with carefully crafted typography, and the “pyrotechnical” American bestseller cover with metallic inks and vivid images (Heller, 1993). Yet it is obvious that one particular design approach has become prevalent: the juxtaposition of images of anonymous human models with the book’s title and the author’s name.

This approach mirrors two long-term trends in advertising: (1) the pictorial content is becoming more dominant (Pollay, 1985) and (2) an increasing number of ad pictures comprise anonymous human models whose names are not stated in the ad, they have no explicit identity, and they claim nothing in explicit verbal terms (Söderlund and Lange, 2006). In other words, the model functions as a mute store dummy. It is therefore not surprising that many scholars in the advertising research tradition refer to this model as “decorative”. The use of images of anonymous models is fuelled by the rapid growth of the stock image industry, and the typical juxtaposition of the ad model and a product (or a brand) contains no explicit verbal statements about their connection. This approach, then, represents an indirect persuasion attempt from the advertiser (McQuarrie and Phillips, 2005). Typically, marketing researchers have studied two types of anonymous models who appear frequently in ads: the physically attractive model and the sexy model.

The first type is relatively well documented; several studies confirm that s/he contributes to the receiver’s responses (e.g., recognition of the ad, the attitude toward the ad, product benefit beliefs, and intentions vis-à-vis the advertised product) so that they become more favorable from the marketer’s point of view. The second type, the sexy model, however, is subject to fewer studies—and those that exist indicate that both positive and negative effects can occur (cf. Jones et al 1998 for an overview).

The use of anonymous models for book covers has so far escaped the attention of researchers. Indeed, there are virtually no academic studies about book covers—of any type—and their effects on the receiver. In this paper, I make attempt to address this void. I do so by conceptualizing the book cover in terms of an ad with the potential of generating several responses in a hierarchy-of-effects framework; here, I focus on the receiver’s responses in terms of beliefs about book content, emotions, the attitude toward the cover, the attitude toward the book, and intentions to read the book. More specifically, I examine the book cover’s potential for creating such responses in one particular case: the use of an anonymous and sexy female model on the front cover. This focus should be seen in the light of the fact that ads portray women in increasingly more explicit sexual terms (Reichert et al, 1999). Not surprisingly, then, this stimulus is today employed in more than a fair share of fiction books’ front covers. Or, as Heller (1993) notes: the stark symbolic images on many covers are often sexual, whether or not the content demands it.

This examination may contribute to existing literature in several ways. First, it is an attempt to extend the traditional hierarchy-of-effects reasoning from advertising literature to marketing communication regarding entertainment products in which the boundaries between the product, the ad, and the package are less clear. Books, magazines, video films, computer games, and music CDs are examples of such products. Second, relatively few advertising studies have assessed in specific and empirical terms how images provide the receiver with non-verbal arguments regarding products. In addition, despite the fact that sexually charged images are increasing in an ad context, not many studies have attempted to come to terms with this aspect of contemporary marketing.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A main point of departure here is that visual elements of a book cover provide the receiver with clues about book content: the receiver, I assume, uses the visual elements for inferences about the content. When the book cover comprises a sexually charged image, I therefore expect that it induces beliefs about the book’s sexual content. I also expect that such beliefs affect further information processing in terms of attitudes and intentions. This reasoning is inspired by Mitchell’s (1986) model of how visual components of an ad affect product attribute beliefs, the attitude toward the ad, and the attitude toward the brand. In addition, however, I expect that beliefs about the sexual content also affect positive emotions—which in turn mediate the impact of beliefs on attitudes. Finally, I assume that the attitude toward the book affects intentions, and here the focus is on intentions to read the book. The links in this proposed model are depicted in Table 1, and I discuss them in the sections below.

Visual co-exposure as arguments about product attributes

A marketer who juxtaposes (a) a photo depicting other things than the product per se with (b) a photo of the product is making an implicit, indirect claim that the product has certain attributes (Messaris, 1997). And in general, consumers appear to easily produce multiple product inferences when faced with image-based indirect advertising claims (McQuarrie and Phillips, 2005; Mitchell and Olson, 1981). More specifically, some studies indicate that a salient attribute of a visual ad stimulus with which a product is co-exposed makes the receiver believe that the product has this particular attribute. For example, in Mitchell and Olson’s (1981) study, an image of a fluffy kitten was visually co-exposed with a facial tissue brand, and this co-exposure induced beliefs that the tissue was soft. In the case of an image of an anonymous and sexy model on a book cover, I therefore assume that this particular image contributes to the receiver’s beliefs that the book has a sexual content. This assumption is represented by Link 1 in the proposed model (cf. Table 1). If a book cover is viewed as a “preview” of the
Beliefs about sexual content and its effects on evaluations of the cover

In the next step, and given that the receiver has formed beliefs about the book’s level of sexual content, I assume that such beliefs affect the attitude toward the cover. This is consonant with the basic assumption in traditional attitude theory (e.g., the theory of reasoned action) that beliefs serve as antecedents of attitudes. And I assume that this impact can follow two routes. In the first route, beliefs about sexual content induce positive emotions (Link 2 in Table 1), and such emotions affect the attitude toward the cover (Link 3 in Table 1). With regard to Link 2, I assume that beliefs about sexual content have a positively valenced charge and that they therefore produce a valence-congruent effect on emotions. Empirical evidence regarding a positive association between visual sexual content and positive emotions is presented in, for example, Hansen and Hansen (1990) who found that rock videos with high visual sex content made subjects feel more happy and less sad than rock videos with either low or moderate visual sex content. Similarly, Severn et al. (1990) found that participants perceived ads with high as opposed to low visual sexual content as more interesting and favorable, and Dudley (1999) found increasing scores for interest and appeal when the level of nudity of a female ad model increased. Then, as far as Link 3 is concerned, I assume that positive emotions have an impact on the attitude toward the cover in a valence-congruent way. This role of emotions to inform or color evaluations has been referred to as affect infusion (Forgas, 1995), and copious advertising studies show that positive emotions evoked by ad elements are positively associated with the attitude toward the ad (Brown et al., 1998).

A second route, however, may also exist, in the sense that beliefs about the sexual content can have a direct impact on the attitude toward the cover. That is to say, emotions may not always influence evaluations; this influence is less likely when the receiver has (a) access to prior evaluations and/or (b) has a clear view about his/her opinion about one particular object (Forgas, 1995). In such cases, which I assume are common with respect to fiction books with a sexual content, I expect a direct link between beliefs about the sexual content and the attitude toward the cover. More specifically and again assuming that a sexual charge is positively valenced, I expect that beliefs about sexual content are positively associated with the attitude toward the cover (Link 4 in Table 1).

The overall evaluation of the book and its consequences

Next, and mirroring the well-documented positive association between the attitude toward the ad and the attitude toward the product/brand in the ad (cf. Brown and Stayman, 1992), I expect that the attitude toward the book cover is positively associated with the attitude toward the book. This link may be direct, in the sense that the book cover provides the receiver with salient information regarding the book’s content (Link 5 in Table 1). It may, however, also be indirect: emotions induced by one particular object can affect not only evaluations of the same object but also evaluations of related objects (Forgas, 1995). Indeed, several studies indicate that positive emotions generated by an ad have a positive impact on the attitude toward the brand, even though this link appears to be weaker than the positive emotions-attitude toward the ad link (Brown et al., 1998). This possibility is represented by Link 6 in the proposed model (cf. Table 1). It is also possible that beliefs about sexual content evoked by the cover have a direct impact on the overall attitude toward the book (cf. Mitchell and Olson 1981), so to allow for this possibility the proposed model includes Link 7 (cf. Table 1).

Finally, many studies show that attitudes evoked by ad stimuli are positively associated with behavioral intentions vis-à-vis the advertised brand/product, and advertising researchers typically examine this association in terms of purchase intentions (Brown and Stayman, 1992). In the book case, however, I acknowledge that many books are received as gifts, and many are borrowed, so the intention variable in the proposed model is related to consumption intent rather than purchase intent. Therefore, the final outcome variable in the proposed model is the intention to read the book and it is included in Link 8 in Table 1.
Judging Fiction Books by the Cover: An Examination of the Effects of Sexually Charged Cover Images

METHOD

Research design and sample. I randomly allocated participants to either (1) a book with a front cover comprising a sexually charged image or (2) a book with a front cover without such an image, and I asked them about their reactions (in terms of the variables in the proposed model). I used two different fiction books to reduce the potential for idiosyncrasies of one particular stimulus. Thus, the design involved four stimuli covers and four groups of participants, and I recruited them from courses in business administration for undergraduates and adult decision makers (N=204; 104 males and 100 females). I also screened the participants so that they had not read the book they were asked to assess.

Stimulus development. First, I selected two fiction books to serve as stimuli: (1) The Dice Man, first published in 1971 by George Cockcroft under the pen name Luke Rhinehart, and (2) South of No North, which is a collection of short stories by Charles Bukowski and originally published in 1973. Both were available in bookshops in the area where I conducted the data collection. The current edition of the Rhinehart book has a drawing of a dice on the front cover, while the current edition of the Bukowski book’s front cover comprises a photo of the author. Both books also had the title and the author’s name on the front cover. I used these two current front covers to represent book covers with a relatively low level of sexual charge. Then, I collected a set of photos from men’s magazines of the FHM type (cf. www.fhm.com for examples), to represent anonymous, sexy female models. A panel of judges were asked to rate these photos in terms of the sexiness of the models, and I selected photos of two different female models who received high sexiness scores by the judges. Next, I created one alternative front cover for each of the two books by replacing the original front cover image with a sexy female image. In the final stimuli, I also included the back cover (which for both books contained the publisher’s text about the content), so that each participant was exposed to a reproduction of both the front cover and the back cover for the book to be judged. These reproductions were made in color and had about the same size as the real books. It can be noted that for both books, the publisher’s back cover text hinted that the book might have a sexual content (in the Bukowski case, for example, the text claimed “these 27 short stories deal with people in American beds and in bars”). The setting, then, represents a situation in which a sexual image on the front cover is relatively congruent with verbal information about the product. This aspect should be stressed, because some researchers have noted that sexual imagery may be more effective if it is perceived as appropriate and relevant by the receiver; that is, when there is a logical link between the sexual image and the product (Severn et al., 1990). It is also worth noting that both books, particularly The Dice Man, indeed have a sexual content (yet this fact is unlikely to have influenced the outcomes of this study, because the participants had not read the book they were judging).

Measures of the main variables. I assessed the participant’s beliefs about the book’s sexual content with the question “What is your impression of the book’s content?” and the response items sexy, suggestive, and lustful, which were scored on a scale ranging from 1 (do not agree at all) to 10 (agree completely). Alpha for this scale was .86. The three items were mixed with 23 other filler items (e.g., warm, beautiful, dark, and serious) to make the purpose of the study less obvious. I measured positive emotions with the item stem “How do you feel now, after having seen this cover?”. It was followed by the adjectives happy, in good mood, glad, and pleasant, and they were scored along a scale ranging from 1 (do not agree at all) to 10 (agree completely). Thus, I used unipolar items to capture positive emotions, which is what Bagossi et al. (1999) recommend. For this scale, alpha was .92. The attitude toward the cover was assessed by asking the participants to rate the cover in terms of three adjective pairs scored on a 10-point scale (bad-good, dislike it-like it, and negative impression-positive impression). The selection of measurement items mirrors how marketing researchers capture attitudes, and the present items are also typical in measures of the attitude toward the ad (cf. Mitchell and Olson, 1981). Alpha was .90 for this scale. The overall evaluation of the book, in terms of the attitude toward the book, was assessed with the same three adjective pairs (bad-good, dislike it-like it, and negative impression-positive impression), and the same 10-point scale response format. Alpha was .82. Advertising researchers use such items frequently in measures of the attitude toward the brand (cf. Mitchell and Olson, 1981). To capture the participants’ intentions to read the book, I asked them to react to the statement “I would like to read this book”, and I provided a response format ranging from 1 (do not agree at all) to 10 (agree completely).

Other measures. As mentioned, I screened the participants to ensure that they had not read the book to be assessed. Yet it is possible to be familiar with a book (and its content) without having read it. Therefore, I included some additional items to allow an examination of the potential for differences between the treatment groups: I asked them if they were familiar with the book, if they were familiar with the author, and if they had read other books by the same author (“yes” and “no” were the response alternatives for these three items). In addition, I asked them about their involvement in fiction. This latter scale contained four items: “Fiction plays an important role in my life”, “I spend much time reading fiction”, “Fiction is one of my main interests”, and “A life without fiction is poor”. They were scored along a dimension ranging from 1 (do not agree at all) to 10 (agree completely). Alpha was .87 for this involvement scale.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Initial analyses. In the first step, and to provide economy for the subsequent analysis, I pooled the treatment groups to create two groups for the main analysis. One group (n=100) received a book cover with a low sexual charge (i.e., the image used by the publisher in the current edition), and one group (n=104) received a book cover with a high sexual charge (i.e., a cover including a photo of an anonymous, sexy female model). Then, I computed the mean for the beliefs about sexual content for these two groups. As expected, the mean was higher in the group who received the sexy female cover (M=5.45) as opposed to the current edition cover (M=4.37). This difference was significant (t(202)=3.76, p<.01), so I contend that the manipulation had the intended effect. There were no significant differences between these two groups in terms of fiction involvement, familiarity with the book, familiarity with the author, and having read other books by the same author.

Assessing the proposed model. I used a structural equation model approach (with AMOS 5) to simultaneously assess the links in the proposed model. The treatment was included in the model in terms of a variable representing two levels of the cover’s sexual charge, it was scored in terms of two values (1=low sexual charge, 2=high sexual charge), and it was modeled as linked to the receiver’s beliefs about the sexual content of the book. Several authors have called for the use of SEM on experimental data, particularly when the data involve multiple latent variables, and some existing attempts to explicitly incorporate treatment variables in a SEM framework are Baker et al. (2002) and Söderlund and Rosengren (2004). The result was a good level of fit for the proposed model (χ²=184.25, df=84, p<.01, CFI=.95,
This alternative model produced a significantly lower level of fit (Δχ²=15.02, df=1, p<.01) confirms the expectation that salient attributes of an image juxtaposed with other product information may affect beliefs about the product. In other words, the presence of an anonymous, sexy female model on the cover enhanced the receivers’ beliefs that the book had a sexual content. The explained variance was 8 percent, which indicates that the sexy image was hardly the only factor affecting the beliefs about sexual content (please recall that the participants were exposed also to the back cover text and that this text, for both books, contained hints about a possible sexual content). Yet if this link is constrained to be zero, the fit of the model becomes significantly worse (Δχ²=12.31, df=3, p<.01), which indicates that the sexy front cover images added meaning beyond what was provided by the back cover text.

Moreover, Table 1 reveals that the beliefs about the book’s sexual content had a direct and positive impact on the attitude toward the cover (Link 4, b=.29, p<.01) and also an indirect effect via positive emotions: the link between the sexual content beliefs and positive emotions was significant (Link 2, b=.31, p<.01), and the link between positive emotions and the attitude toward the cover was significant, too (Link 3, b=.37, p<.01). Affect infusion, then, seems to have taken place in this part of the response process.

Turning to the impact on the attitude toward the book, there were significant and positive links from sexual content beliefs (Link 7, b=.31, p<.01) and from the attitude toward the cover (Link 5, b=.47, p<.01). Affect infusion, however, seems to have been limited, in the sense that there was no significant impact of positive emotions on the attitude toward the book (Link 6, b=.04, p=.59). Finally, there was a significant and positive impact of the attitude toward the book on the intention to read it (Link 8, b=.75, p=.01).

### Assessing rival models

One of my main assumptions has been that the exposure to a book cover with sexually charged images enhances the receiver’s beliefs that the book has a sexual content. Such beliefs, I assume, function as an immediate appraisal and provide the receiver with a rapid, initial way of classifying a stimulus. And in the proposed model, these beliefs are assumed to be the point of departure for subsequent steps in the sense-making process. In order to allow for a rival view of this process, however, I examined an alternative to the proposed model in which there were also direct links from the treatment variable to the attitude toward the ad, positive emotions, and the attitude toward the book. These three links were then constrained to be zero—to allow a comparison with the proposed model. The alternative model, however, produced a significantly lower level of fit (Δχ²=12.31, df=3, p<.01) than the proposed model, which provides some evidence about the pre-attitudinal (and pre-emotional) role of beliefs.

Moreover, emotions has emerged relatively lately as a component in theories of advertising effectiveness. The analysis of the proposed model, however, provides evidence of their ability to be evoked by beliefs—and their capacity to color evaluations—in a book cover context. To examine this further, I assessed an alternative to the proposed model in which the three links involving positive emotions (Link 2, Link 3, and Link 6) were constrained to be zero. This alternative model produced a significantly lower level of fit than the proposed model (Δχ²=47.24, df=3, p<.01), so it can be contended that emotions indeed appear to contribute to our understanding of the effects of book covers. It can be noted that both book covers in this study generated positive emotions on a relatively high as opposed to a relatively low level; for both covers, the mean for positive emotions was significantly higher (M=6.21 for The Dice Man and M=6.03 for South of No North) than the scale midpoint (5.5).

### Differences between male and female participants?

Some researchers have suggested that males are generally more susceptible to influence by sexually charged visual stimuli than females (cf. Zuckerman, 1971) and that females would react negatively while males would react positively to ads with sexually charged images of females (Jones et al., 1998). In the present study, in which the sexually charged stimuli comprised only females, this issue indeed deserves attention. First, I examined if the sex of the participant was involved in the book cover’s influence on the beliefs about the book’s sexual content. I used a two-way ANOVA (with participant sex and collapsed treatment group membership as the factors) to assess the influence on beliefs about sexual content, and this analysis indicated, as already seen above, that the treatment had a main effect (F=15.40, p<.01, eta²=.07). That is to say, the mean for sexual content beliefs was higher for the participants who had received the sexy female cover compared to the participants who received the publisher’s current cover. The sex of the participant had no significant main effect (F=2.01, p=.16, eta²=.01), but the interaction was significant (F=5.97, p=.01, eta²=.03). And an inspection of the cell means shows that the beliefs about sex content reached a higher level for males who had seen the sexy female cover (M=6.06) compared to females who had seen the sexy female cover (M=4.96). As an alternative way to assess this, I computed the zero-order correlation between the collapsed treatment group variable and the sexual content beliefs variable separately for males and females; it was higher for males (r=.42, p<.01) than for females (r=.01, p=.31). This difference was significant at the 1 percent level (Z=2.43). Thus, the sexy female image on the book cover had a stronger impact on males compared to females with regard to beliefs about the book’s sexual content. I also examined the proposed associations between beliefs regarding sexual content and its consequences in the proposed model (positive emotions, the attitude toward the cover, and the attitude toward the book) for males and females. An analysis of zero-order correlations revealed that each correlation was positive for both males and females, and that the only significant difference in strength occurred in the correlation between beliefs about sexual content and the attitude toward the book; this correlation was higher for males (r=.53) than for females (r=.29). The difference was significant at the 5 percent level (Z=2.02). It thus seems as if the main difference between males and females had to do with how the sexual content beliefs were evoked; once evoked, they seem to have had similar effects.

### DISCUSSION

One finding in this study was that a salient attribute of a front cover image (here: the anonymous model was sexy) is capable of enhancing beliefs that the book’s content has the same attribute (here: sexiness)—despite the fact that no explicit, verbal statements were provided regarding the connection between the female model and the book content. This, then, adds evidence regarding how easy receivers can make product inferences based on images to the small, but growing, literature on visual persuasion with juxtaposed objects. Moreover, another finding was that such beliefs influence other responses; in the present study, beliefs about sexual content boosted several responses generally considered vital in advertising effectiveness research (positive emotions, the attitude toward the ad, and the attitude toward the product). This finding should be seen...
in the light of a tendency in many advertising studies (cf. Brown and Stayman, 1992) to conceptualize product beliefs (typically labeled brand cognitions) as consequences of the attitude toward the ad; in the model proposed here, however, such beliefs are seen as a preattitudinal (and pre-emotional) construct.

An additional aspect of the findings is related to the setting in which they were obtained: as already noted, the boundaries between an ad, a package, and the product per se are fuzzy in the case of books. Yet the proposed model, which I based on traditional advertising response constructs, appears to have been able to capture the book cover responses in a fairly consonant way. This, I believe, signals that the proposed model may be capable of capturing communication effects of also other products with fuzzy boundaries between the physical product per se and the means by which it is promoted (e.g., music CDs, magazines, video movies, and computer games). Incidentally, vivid imagery of one type or another is frequently used in the design of such products. They represent the output of a gargantuan entertainment industry very concerned with marketing activities, but few academic studies have dealt with the communicative aspects of these products. The findings, then, are encouraging in the sense that the existing conceptual corpus in advertising research may be useful for other communicative objects than the traditional ad. The extent to which the traditional constructs can be developed to further our understanding of the communication effects of the product-as-an-ad-and-a-package (we do not yet have a proper label for this category of products!), however, is a challenging issue for further research.

Moreover, and returning to the issue of image attributes and their impact on product beliefs, some limitations in the present study should be observed—and they offer additional issues for further research. First, and in the specific case of sexually charged images, there are several ways to produce a sexual charge by visual means—and some ways are likely to have stronger effects on female customers (and maybe also on male customers) than such images from men’s magazines employed here. Further research in this area thus needs to adopt a less restricted view of what may be considered sexy. Second, and again with regard to the specific case of sexually charged stimuli, I did not capture the participants’ responses in terms of arousal and sexual excitement. The measurement of such reactions, however, may be necessary to obtain a richer understanding of what sexually charged images do to potential customers. Third, the setting involved a relatively congruent link between the charge of the sexually charged stimulus image and verbal clues (i.e., information provided by the back cover), An issue that merits attention is therefore the extent to which similar effects would occur when the level of congruity is relatively lower. Finally, I focused on sexually charged stimulus images in the present study, but other salient image attributes clearly exist, both for books and for other entertainment products—such as violence, criminality, fantasy and harmony. Such attributes are likely to produce different patterns of influence from product beliefs to other response variables. In other words, to fully capture the grammar of the juxtaposition of images with other product information, many different image attributes remain to be catalogued and explored.

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Japanese Love Hotels: Protecting Privacy for Private Encounters
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ABSTRACT
This paper explores a cultural curiosity—Japanese “love hotels.” These have historical sociological roots deep in the culture. But even with a religious and cultural acceptance of sex in Japan, privacy is still an important aspect of the love hotel business. The ways in which love hotels protect patrons’ privacy is shown here to be a primary part of the service encounter. The importance of privacy poses that the need for sexual privacy may be rooted deep in our evolutionary biology. This is an important lesson for the field of marketing, especially for those in the sex-related industries.

INTRODUCTION
One of the most fascinating businesses in which to examine marketing issues is the “love hotel” industry in Japan. As their name implies, love hotels are by-the-hour hotels focused on carnal pleasures. North America may partly fulfill this niche with seedy “adult motels.” But the Japanese version is a high-tech wonderland. It is not just a place to fulfill sexual needs but also a place that encourages customers to engage their sensual appetites (Tsuzuki, 2001).

Recent estimates are that there are at least 30,000 love hotels operating in Japan that are worth $40 billion US (Chaplin, 2007). Others have estimated that around 500 million couples visit love hotels each year, which equates to more than a million visits per day (West, 2005, p. 38). Currently, love hotels are generally restricted to Asia (Burpee, 1999). There seems to be considerable interest in love hotels, judging from the popular press articles about them, their mention in travel guide books, a book of love hotel interiors by Kyoichi Tsuzuki (1991), and a traveling exhibit of these photos (e.g., Burpee, 1999; Cameron, 2005; ikjeld.com, 2005). Recent financial returns have been phenomenal. In fact, some financial reports put the financial returns in the 15% range and resulted in overseas investor interest (Cameron, 2005; Dodd, 2004).

While a previous paper has discussed Japanese love hotels in general (Basil 2007), the focus of this paper is the lengths to which hotels go to protect the privacy of patrons. To the extent that we understand this niche of the hotel business and the lengths to which the industry goes to protect the privacy of patrons we will be better able to fathom both the financial returns and fundamental principles of marketing. This paper will start by examining the phenomenon of love hotels from a historical and sociological perspective.

HISTORY
There is an assortment of historical accounts of the origin of love hotels. Some tales trace the roots back to the Edo Period (1600-1868) and specialized tea houses called “deaijaya” (West, 2005). But these were typically locations for prostitution, however, and couples were often not part of the picture, so it is more likely that the love hotel industry for couples arises from a later rootstock. One account is that “enshuku” establishments developed early in the 20th century to cater to couples. Interestingly, two of the most shocking features were reported to be the double beds and locking doors (West, 2005). A second account suggests that the hotels sprung up to provide space for soldiers and prostitutes during the US occupation (ikjeld.com, 2005). A third account traces the industry to the relocation of hotel operators to Tokyo after a flood, and their search for a niche in the market (ikjeld.com, 2005).

Whatever their origin, love hotels began sprouting up in sizeable numbers in the 1950s. Their basic operation was an affordable love-nest that rented by the hour. In the 1960s they were often labeled “yellow hotels,” “couple hotels,” or finally, “love hotels” (West, 2005). Almost immediately, these love hotels began developing “themes.” “…from the 1960s on love hotels appeared, catering-at least superficially-to modern, Western ideas of love and romance. Many took an individual theme, whether a European-style hotel bedroom, a pleasure den with a rotating bed and ceiling mirror, or a movie such as the eternally popular Roman Holiday or Gone With the Wind, complete with duplicate bed and curtains” (ikjeld.com, 2005).

During the 1970s one of the most famous of these “love hotels” was Tokyo’s Meguro Emperor Hotel (West, 2005). This “kitchy castle” style of love hotel can be seen in the photos in Figure 1. The early 1980s was a prosperous period for the love hotel business which coincided with a boom in the Japanese economy. In the late 1980s, however, there was a downturn in the economy. Partly as a result, a “Public Morals Act” was passed to regulate the runaway love hotel industry (West, 2005). Most expected that this would be a death blow to love hotels. However, the love hotel business began to change. First, the hotels moved away from the typical tacky themes that were popular in the 1980s toward individually-themed rooms, done by special designers. Part of this was a purposeful move away from the “sex” business into “boutique” hotels, if only to keep the authorities away. Yet many of the old traditions remained. For example, the most notorious love hotels were “grandfathered in” and allowed to operate in the form they were before the law was passed in the love hotel districts that has existed before such as Tokyo’s Shibuya’s Love Hotel Hill (Dogenzaka) and Sapporo’s Susukino District. In addition, other “boutique hotels” were allowed to have hourly rates.

SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS
Several previous analysts have speculated on their own sociological explanations of the sex-based love hotels (e.g., Chaplin, 2007; West, 2005). But it is worth a visit to review and reorganize what we know about the sociological and cultural foundations of love hotels.

Erotica, Japan has a long history of acceptance of the erotic. Celebration of the erotic is probably based in the religious roots. Hindu, a religion whose acknowledgement of the erotic can be seen in the Kama Sutra, is a foundation of Buddhism. Buddhism, meanwhile, is the historical basis and currently one of the two most common religions in Japan with its own acceptance of erotic. For example, Japan has a tradition of erotic images called “Shunga” or “images of spring” that date back as far as the early 17th century (Fagioli, 1998; Klopmpmakers, 2001; Uhleneck, Winkel, Reigle-Newland, Tinios, Segawa-Seigle, & Shigeru, 2005). Perhaps the most famous of these were erotic art called “Syunsouzu” that was done by Hokusai Katsushika (usually called “Hokusai”) who lived in the Edo period between 1760 and 1849. Followers continued and built upon the tradition in both art and writing. Shinto is the more recent state religion of Japan, and is probably an even more hospitable religious milieu. For example, Shinto celebrates a fertility festival dedicated to the penis called “Houmen Matsuri” where whopping wooden phalluses are publicly paraded. This cultural foundation results in something that has been described as a country
where sex is accepted without much of the guilt associated with it in the West. A lack of guilt over sex makes for an accommodating environment for love hotels.

Marriage. Another factor that likely led to the growth of the love hotel industry in Japan is rooted in marriage traditions. Historically Japan has had a high rate of arranged marriages. In these cases some critics have observed that a sense of duty is based more on a sense of obligation than erotic love (Shelley, 1998). In addition to arranged marriage, a current condition, similar to many other countries around the world, is that people are marrying at an older age. This increases the likelihood of premarital sex. As a result of these two forces, some believe this allows Japanese people to be more tolerant of sex and extra-marital affairs (though, as is common elsewhere, this appears to be more acceptable for men).

Space. Japan is also a comparatively crowded country. An average apartment consists of two “6-tatami-mat rooms” or approximately 525 square feet (Smith, 2004). Per person, the typical space per individual in Japan is 31 square meters (333 square feet) compared to 60 square meters in the US (645 square feet; Yan, 2004). “Space is at a premium. Also, until recently, most people lived with their families until marriage, often with three generations under one roof, separated by only paper screens. Without a private space for the most private of acts, the streets wouldn’t be a decent place to walk” (Moran, 2005). Research has shown that crowded conditions have been shown to increase the desire for privacy for sexual intercourse (Edwards & Booth, 2001). Thus love hotels provide space for these encounters.

Perhaps as a result of the religious and cultural acceptance of the erotic, cultural aspects of contemporary marriage, and crowded conditions in Japan, love hotels cater to a cross-section of customers. There is a dearth of research on sexuality in Japan (West, 2004), so there is not much hard data on actual customers that is not proprietary. Yet the evidence is clear that clients include couples that are both married and unmarried as well as some level of prostitution (Chaplin, 2007). Yet the variety of couples that visit love hotels may result in advantages for all. While a young couple may simply be seeking a location to enable an encounter, an extra-marital couple may be seeking a discreet place for their encounter, and a married couple may find a “love hotel” provides a level of illicitness which can provide something “out of the ordinary.” While the first two may provide the bulk of the business, the latter may help to provide legitimacy for the love hotel industry. Yet the range of customers that are accommodated also results in a preoccupation with privacy that is a model for marketers everywhere.

THE CONCEPT OF PRIVACY

Privacy is an important concept in marketing, and perhaps getting more so in the contemporary era as more and more data are held by companies and governments (Curran & Richards, 2004). With regard to the specific issue of privacy and sex, there appears to be a trend toward greater privacy for sexual relations. In the United States the principle can be traced back at least as far as the 1965 Griswold v. Connecticut decision where the Supreme Court of the United States struck down state laws banning contraceptives under the 4th Amendment’s “Right to privacy” and that principle seems to have been expanded through various decisions to today (George & Tubbs, 2005).

It appears that the issues of privacy and sexuality are quite old, perhaps predating the Judeo-Christian morality (Yeazell, 2001). It is possible that the desire for privacy in sexual relations is very fundamental, arising from socio-biological roots in mate guarding (Buss, 2002). Supporting research has shown that people in crowded conditions express a desire for sexual relations in private (Edwards & Booth, 2001).

There are some indicators that Japan and the Japanese may have somewhat greater cultural openness to sexuality. This can be seen in the religious roots of Shinto, historical art such as Shunga, and current acceptance of erotic manga comics. Yet the Japanese Love Hotels take great effort taken to insure privacy. One reason may be the fact that many love hotels encounters, especially prostitution and extramarital relations, may be less legitimate.

Another reason for the privacy of love hotels may be cultural. While we are familiar with the concept of privacy in our own culture, there is some evidence that the concept of privacy varies across cultures (Capurro, 2005). Some evidence suggests that in Japan the concept of privacy may be somewhat different than it is in the west (Nakada & Tamura, 2005). Largely this is centered around the notion of public and private. Perhaps this would explain why public erotic art and love hotels are tolerated and acceptable, but other acts are expected to remain private. The culture and state may allow love hotels, yet individuals may not individually endorse them and in fact may be embarrassed by them. Consistent with this assertion, there is also a dearth of research on human sexual behavior in Japan, including non-proprietary data on love hotel
visits. My personal communication with Japanese people and people familiar with Japanese culture affirm the private aspect of sexuality.

So it is interesting to note that even in a culture where sexuality is embraced, there is still a great deal of effort afforded to protect the privacy of lovers. As one popular writer has summarized it, “To ensure their clients can fully relax, love-hotels are models of discretion. Customers never see the staff and anonymity is assured” (Moran, 2005). This paper will examine the ways that love hotels protect the privacy of their patrons.

HOW LOVE HOTELS PROTECT PATRONS’ PRIVACY

One of the first identifiable ways of protecting privacy is through the locations of love hotels. Specifically, love hotels are located largely off of the thoroughfares that are the turf of traditional hotels, and instead are more likely located on smaller streets or alleys. The Dogenzaka region of Shibuya and the Susukino district of Sapporo are excellent examples of these environments. Because of the lower levels of traffic passing by, lodgers are less likely to be seen by others and this offers a measure of discretion for customers. These alley locations can be seen in the photos in Figure 2.

Another way of insuring privacy for potential patrons is through providing information in front of the hotels. This can range from price information to photos of the rooms. Similar to a menu outside a restaurant, this allows people to browse without having to convey their intentions by going into (and out of) the wrong hotel. Examples of these signs are shown in Figure 3.

An alternative way of insuring privacy is by providing potential customers plenty of information for the hotel and room selection process in advance of a visit to a love hotel. As a result, a potential customer can compare hotel, rooms, and prices before going to a love hotel neighborhood. This minimizes their “window shopping” time and reduces the likelihood they will be seen in the street outside of the love hotel. Two media that are used to convey this information are websites and booklets that show the different hotels, their location, and each of the rooms at the hotels. Two such websites are http://www.binguan.info/index.htm and http://www.sapporomig.co.jp/rio/price.html. In addition, these sites also make available a printed directory of love hotels in a region. And many love hotels are part of a consortium where a visit to one love hotel provides information on the other hotels owned by the same chain.

Once a person has decided on a hotel, another way in which love hotels insure privacy is through the use of entrances that provide sheltered entry. Patrons can quickly “duck in” so that passersby have to be in exactly the right location to see someone enter a love hotel. As a result a friend or neighbor who thinks they may have seen someone they know suddenly finds that the person has simply disappeared, hopefully before they are sure if that was
Mr. X or not. Examples of these entrances can be seen in the photos in Figure 4.

There are similar accommodations for those who drive. Many love hotels have dedicated parking with walls and security to reduce the likelihood of being seen. As a previous writer has observed, “Drivers enter underground car parks hidden from view and staff cover their number plates to foil any prying eyes” (Moran, 2005).

The third way that love hotels protect the privacy of customers is by using dark lobbies. Since being seen in the lobby of a love hotel would probably be even more embarrassing than being seen in front of a love hotel, lobbies are built to insure privacy. First off, love hotels are often fairly small. Minimizing the number of customers reduces the likelihood of running into someone you know. In addition to being dark, the lobbies are often structurally segmented by screens and such. These measures reduce the likelihood of customers being visible to others. The darkness also makes it harder to identify someone in the rare event the customers would pass an employee or another customer.

A fourth way of insuring privacy is to insure customers do not have to face a desk clerk. Several years ago this was done through the use of signs and screens. “An empty reception greets customers and a back-lit panel displays photographs of the available rooms” (Moran, 2005). The clerk was stationed behind an opaque screen where the money or credit card was passed. More recently this is accomplished with computers. The computers display images of the rooms. A couple chooses a room and is off (Figure 5).

Often these computers produce a slip with the room number. To help with the navigation through the dimly lit lobby, there are often lights that direct customers to the elevator (this can be seen in the floor lighting), and even to their room (often indicated in green). As Moran has observed, “…lights on the floor act as a guide to the room” (Moran, 2005). These navigational devices are shown in the photos in Figure 6.

Once the room is reached and the couple enters, the door locks (Moran, 2005). Once inside the room, hotels often sell other products or services. The Public Morals Act intended to make it difficult for love hotels by requiring food service. As a result, many love hotels now offer food. But to insure privacy for customers, often this is through in-room self-service devices. Alcohol and much of the food is sold in refrigerators that automatically keep track of what is removed. Another product that is often offered in love hotels are sex toys. Figure 7 includes photos of an automated sex-toy vending machine also with an automatic inventory system. Because these machines are located within the room, they provide...
privacy to customers, perhaps even a better place to pick up a sex toy than at a store.

The conclusion of the visit to the love hotel is the payment. To retain the anonymity of the encounter most love hotels include an automated check-out machine just inside the door of the hotel room. The system accesses the check-in time and rate information and adds any in-room purchases. A simple detail of the bill and payment are all that are required before slipping away anonymously. Credit cards are accepted but cash works even better in retaining the anonymity of the encounter (Figure 8).

**DISCUSSION**

Love hotels are a large and important business in Japan. They are rooted in a history of religious and cultural acceptance of the erotic. Throw this history into the contemporary context of crowded conditions, and you can see why love hotels have come to provide a location for these carnal encounters. A close analysis of love hotels demonstrates that they function by providing a place and by going to great lengths to insure that that place is private.

There are important insights to be learned from the study of love hotels for a number of marketing ventures, including pornography, sex stores, and the commercial sex industry. Specifically, even in Japan, a country tolerant of sexuality, privacy protection appears to be an important principal for a successful sex-based enterprise. Perhaps the sense of vulnerability arises from something more basic than religious rules, but arises from a psycho-biological feeling of vulnerability or mate guarding while engaged in sexual relations. Whatever the case, it appears to be critically important to assure customers how their privacy will be protected, to demonstrate how that happens, and then to live up to that standard.

It is also interesting to note the cultural differences in Japan’s tolerance of love hotels. This may also be a reflection of the ability to separate public and private so there is some tolerance of the collective will about what other people chose to do, while in the west we often are not worried about our own behaviors, but are worried about others’—this is called the “third-person effect” (Lee & Tamborini, 2005).

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Conceptualization

The attention level of a consumer is higher when a message comes from a reference or a member of a group rather than from an ad or a salesperson (Gremler et al., 2001). In fact, according to Ramsey (2005), 90% of American consumers consider word-of-mouth one of the best information sources, twice as much as advertising or editorial sources. People's opinions are also widely available on the Internet. Given the above, it would be advisable for companies to identify people who are likely to engage in electronic word-of-mouth advertising, i.e., find virtual connectors.

There are three types of influencers in traditional word-of-mouth: mavens, opinion leaders and innovators (also called early adopters). Mavens are considered an excellent source of information for any kind of product or service (Slama and Williams, 1990). They know the best places to shop and are knowledgeable about many kinds of products. Moreover, according to Sundarham et al. (1998), mavens engage in word-of-mouth out of altruism, for the pleasure of sharing information and to reinforce their image in their community.

Contrary to mavens, opinion leaders are usually specialists in one particular product (Feick and Price, 1987; Goldsmith B., Flynn and Goldsmith E, 2003; Clark and Goldsmith E., 2005). They influence other consumers (Rogers and Cartano, 1962) and shape their purchasing behavior regarding specific products (Flynn and al., 1996). In fact, the literature has identified a small but positive correlation between mavens and opinion leaders (Feick and Price, 1987).

Lastly, innovators are consumers who are early adopters of a product (Rogers, 1995). This psychological trait is common to all consumers, but to a different degree. Some people are more innovative than others. (Midgley and Dowling, 1978), Goldsmith (2001) describes innovators as purchasers who are always searching for new products and are less concerned about price. However, contrary to mavens, they limit their purchases to one product category in particular (Goldsmith et al., 1996).

All types of influencers play a major role in word-of-mouth. By using their networks, some influencers, such as mavens and opinion leaders, can reach substantially more people than regular consumers. Although we know that mavens, innovators and opinion leaders can influence people, we do not know if they act as connectors by actually networking with others.

Method and Procedures

We worked with four different types of cultural companies. Each one gave us its database of email subscribers. A total of 32,254 emails addresses were obtained. Data collection was divided into two parts: The first part consisted of a conventional survey where various socio-demographic and psychographic variables were used to define profiles, such as maven, opinion leader and innovator. The second part consisted of an experiment whereby an email was sent to the 2,744 study participants for whom we had received a full profile.

Part I: Gathering information from subscribers

As a first step, an email was sent on behalf of each of the companies that supplied us with a database. We asked the subscribers from the cultural companies to participate in our survey. Participants received the email in a format similar to the one used by the company to which they were subscribers. This technique was used to ensure that our substitution would not be classified as spam.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part contained questions on participants’ involvement and interest in the cultural community to which they belong and measured their profiles against the characteristics of mavens, opinion leaders and innovators. The second part of the questionnaire contained a series of socio-demographic questions to obtain a clearer profile of survey participants.

Part II: The experimental phase

Two weeks after sending out the initial questionnaire, an email was sent to the 2,744 study participants for whom we had a full profile. Regardless of the artistic community to which they belonged, all emails were written in a similar manner. All emails were sent from a common server, but always on behalf of the cultural company. The purpose was to assure participants that they were receiving email from the company they subscribed to and not from a third party.

The server then tracked participants who opened the email and forwarded it to other consumers and, if so, to how many. Of the 2,744 emails sent, 1,402 (or about 51%) were opened.

When reading the email, study participants were invited to send the information to friends. To forward the email, the participants simply had to click on a link in the email. The link then opened a Web page on which the participants were asked to enter their name and email address. To avoid creating any bias that would have inflated the number of connectors, no incentive was offered for sending emails. Of the 1,402 emails opened, 168 were forwarded to friends. The people likely to circulate word-of-mouth advertising electronically are called virtual connectors. The 168 connectors represent approximately 0.5% of the initial database of 32,254 email addresses in Part I and correspond to 12% of active members in the cultural community, i.e., the 1,402 people who opened their emails.

Major Findings

To discover if socio-demographic variables affect email distribution, we analyzed the socio-demographic profile of connectors by comparing connectors’ results with those of non-connectors. Using the Chi-square method, we found that there are no significant socio-demographic differences between connectors and non-connectors. Then, we performed an Anova analysis with the three factors: opinion leader, maven and innovator and we found that connectors are characterized as opinion leaders as well as mavens and possess features of innovative personalities. In addition, the t-test analysis has demonstrated that connectors receive more personal emails per day and take more time to answer their personal emails. Connectors have three emails addresses compared to two for non-connectors, but they do not have more contact names in their email address book than non-connectors. Also, connectors are faster than non-connectors to open their emails. This study demonstrates the importance of viral marketing for companies and enabled companies to identify their connectors.

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Innovative Consumer Behavior in Online Communities
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ABSTRACT
In this study, we analyze creative consumer behavior in online basketball communities. More precisely, we are interested in the kind of ideas generated, how innovations in online communities develop, and how the members of online communities support each other in generating creative solutions. While the process of innovation slightly differs between Chinese- and English-speaking online communities, the quality and quantity of the ideas developed is impressive in both cultures. Various examples indicate that community members, in principle, are willing to share their ideas with manufacturers.

INTRODUCTION
Creative consumers attracted by new products and innovation can be found in online communities that are centered around common interests (e.g. Kozinets 1999; McAlexander et al. 2002; Muniz and Schau 2005). While several scholars emphasize the creative capacity and enormous innovative potential of online communities in the area of new product development (Kozinets 2002; von Hippel 2005), little is known about how innovations within online consumer groups develop. Until now, no study has thoroughly explored consumer innovation in online communities. According to Borroughs and Mick (2004), it is generally surprising that consumer creativity is such a rare topic in consumer research, considering the undisputed success of many products that were initially invented by consumers—from Kleenex to mountain bikes (von Hippel 2005). Despite the fact that that innovative consumer behavior is actually an integral part in the daily life of every consumer, not a rare activity (Moreau and Dahl 2005), little is known about when, why, or how consumers act creatively (Burroughs and Mick 2004). In this study, we explore the process of innovation in online consumer groups. More precisely, we are interested in the quantity and quality of the ideas generated, how innovations in online communities develop, and how the members of online communities support each other in generating creative solutions. We further investigate how creative output is facilitated by the social environment of online consumer groups. With this study, we aim to advance the general understanding of creative consumer behavior in online communities.

THEORY OF INNOVATION CREATION
Comining up with innovative ideas and problem solutions is considered a highly creative task and an important precondition for successful innovations. Often, creativity is equated with the ability to come up with unique yet appropriate ideas and novel solutions (Amabile 1996). An outcome is considered creative if it surpasses previous products in the domain (Csikszentmihalyi 2002), often determined by external experts or peers (Sternberg and Lubart 1991).

Creativity Process: According to Amabile (1996), creative outcomes follow a sequence of five steps: 1) problem or task identification 2) preparation 3) response generation 4) response validation and communication and 5) outcome. When the solutions generated either fulfill or fail to fulfill initial requirements, the creative process ends. If there are some practical ideas, but no satisfactory solution, some process iterations may occur until a more advanced outcome is reached or task motivation has fallen below minimum level, applying the additional knowledge gained in previous trails. While successful outcomes may stimulate task motivation, lead to increased knowledge, and initiate even more creative outputs (Csikszentmihalyi 2002; Csikszentmihalyi 1975), failures-as a confirmation of incompetence—may lead to frustration and decreased motivation (Deci and Ryan 2002; Deci and Ryan 1985).

Creativity is predominantly driven by intrinsic motivation. Individuals consider the act of creation as playful and rewarding activity. Intrinsic motivation can be noticed as interest, involvement, curiosity, satisfaction, or positive challenge. Extrinsic motives that increase someone’s sense of competence, need for finding a creative solution, or prevailing task involvement are considered as synergistic and creativity enhancing, while task engagement because of pure extrinsic motives such as money, status, or job promotion, is considered detrimental to creativity (DeCharms 1968; Deci and Ryan 2002; Deci and Ryan 1985).

Individual Characteristics and Social Environment: The creativity level of the outcome is determined by the creative talent of the individual and the social environment facilitating or undermining creative outputs (Amabile 1996; Csikszentmihalyi 1999). On an individual level, task motivation, domain-relevant skills, and creativity-relevant processes are considered main components of creativity. In addition to the individual creativity components, the social environment affects an individual’s creativity. The influence of social factors on individual creativity results from communication and social interaction (Amabile 1988). Since the social environment influences an individual’s creativity, it also affects consumers’ abilities to generate innovative products and services. Theories of organizational creativity and innovation identify several dimensions that are related to creativity. Encouragement, challenge, unconditional rewards, adequate pressure, support, autonomy, group diversity, and cultural norms are considered social factors that enhance creativity (Amabile et al. 1996; Kanter 1988).

Creativity and Innovation in Online Communities: Ideally, community members will score well on each creativity component. Interested consumers that are low on creativity skills may not come up with very creative solutions themselves, but they may be able to assess the appropriateness of someone else’s solution, challenge it, and contribute valuable modifications due to their domain specific knowledge. On the contrary, motivated consumers low in domain-specific skills may come up with ideas that seem bizarre, but may be used and modified by others in possession of relevant knowledge. Consumers that are low on both creativity and domain-relevant skills—may be considered unqualified unless they inspire others to become more innovative, give support in coordination activities, ask challenging questions, or just admire the more creative members. They thus inspire creative consumer behavior in the community.

RESEARCH FIELD
Online communities dedicated to basketball shoes were selected as research object based on four considerations: first, basketball is played and watched by a great number of people all over the world. Hence, a high number of dedicated online communities can be expected. Second, as basketball is a team game, players typically have tight relationships and share their experiences both on and
offline. Third, one of the authors played basketball enthusiastically for more than ten years and possesses a profound knowledge in the field of basketball footwear. Fourth, the aim of this study was to focus on products of an already established major mass market. This distinguishes our research from former studies on creative sports communities which mainly focused on product innovations in emerging sports in offline contexts.

**METHOD**

A netnographic approach (Kozinets 1999; Kozinets 2002) was chosen for data collection.

Netnography has its origin in ethnography (e.g. Arnould and Wallendorf 1994), which is the study of groups and their members through direct involvement of the researcher. Netnography is ethnography adapted to the Internet. While before the emergence of the Internet it was necessary for a researcher to participate in a group, nowadays netnography enables observation and analysis of the communication of online communities without active participation. In this sense the social interaction and communication among members, rather than the people themselves, are the subject of the research. Since netnography is conducted without direct researcher participation, it can be used to unobtrusively study the nature and behavior of online consumer groups. The analysis is conducted in the natural context of the community and is thus free from the bias which may arise through the involvement of the researcher or experimental research settings.

Out of more than 800 Chinese- and English-speaking online basketball communities which could be identified on the Internet, ten online communities were selected as the most interesting ones for the research by considerations of relevance and quality of content, numbers of members, posting frequency, and professionalism. The ten communities comprised five English-speaking (Niketalk, Basketballboards, Solecollector, Kickz101, Kicksology) and five Chinese-speaking (Chinese Streetball, Good Shoes, Xinxin Sport Shoes, Chedan, Wild Donkey) communities. All ten communities were observed over a period of 6 month. During the observation phase, all content related to knowledge and innovation was screened and the most relevant discussions were filed electronically. More than 11,000 posts selected from 240,000 initially identified relevant posts were analyzed and interpreted using software. After the analysis, the trustworthiness of the results was checked by comparing the findings with data received from additional literature and interviews, as well as by comparing the results among different communities and cultures.

**FINDINGS**

*Communities and Their Members:* Typically, members are between 15 and 25 years old and go to school or university. Their intense involvement with basketball footwear is shown by the fact that they often possess numerous pairs of basketball shoes; often more than twenty and in some cases even up to one hundred different pairs. Consequently, they have extensive use-experience with a variety of models and brands. Social ties among the most active participants are so strong that they even organize so-called "summits" where they meet and get to know each other offline.

Each community has a group of highly active, well-known, and knowledgeable insiders (Kozinets 2002). What these "opinion leaders" express is immediately adopted by most other members of the community. Some members even save the opinion leaders' comments electronically for future reading:

Yi Ming is one of the earliest sneaker lovers in China, he wrote lots of good shoes articles in the community. To tell you a secret, I saved all Yi Ming’s posts in my computer...also his top level posts.

*Quantity and Quality of Creative Output:* In all of the observed online basketball communities, members develop innovative ideas for new or improved products. Chinese- and English-speaking communities are similar in that the quality and quantity of innovative output is impressive in both groups. Approximately 30% of all members of the ten online basketball communities engage in innovation activities in one way or another. For them, joint innovation is one of the main reasons to join the community. One quite common type of innovation is the modification and customization of existing basketball shoes, for example some members attach denim or glitter to their shoes while others lace their shoes in certain ways so that they can spot each other offline:

Hey.. Now we can spot one another on the street without saying a word! I wonder if I see anyone at bizerkeley this year doing this...

Creative members conceptualize not only modifications and improvements of current models but also develop entirely new technologies and basketball shoes from scratch. In total, analysis identified 24 components and attributes of a basketball shoe for which community members make specific contributions, create modifications, and come up with new ideas (e.g. cushioning, lacing, and ventilation). Typically, innovations are freely shared within the community either in written descriptions or self-made drawings.

Consumer innovators seem to be either motivated by the perception of a so-far unsatisfied need or by the inner satisfaction they derive from engaging in the creative activity itself. While some of the ideas posted are driven by the perception of a need that is still not met by any existing product on the market (e.g. the protection from injury), a much higher number, approximately 80% of the ideas posted in the sample, are triggered by members in search of excitement. These innovators develop and pursue new ideas because of the fun, pleasure, and enjoyment they derive from the activity itself rather than to achieve a desired outcome. In contrast to functional need-driven innovators for whom innovating is not part of their community routine and who typically express their ideas solely in a verbal manner, innovators driven by excitement regularly and consciously engage in innovation activities. They contribute more sophisticated ideas, which are usually translated into prototypes in the form of drawings or even computerized, sometimes three-dimensional, renderings (see figures 1 to 4). For the most skilled innovators, developing designs combines the fun of creative activities and the desire to find solutions for perceived problems into one activity. The following statement refers to a member who perfectly manages to design futuristic looks—a quite enjoyable activity—and still does not lose the focus on the functional aspects of a basketball shoe:

Not only do your designs look sweet, but they are quite innovative. Whenever I draw shoes I don’t think about function. Just looks. But you got the whole shebang.

Innovators typically spend significant time making their own drawings of basketball shoes or shoe features and demonstrate impressive drawing and design skills. For them, making their own renderings is more than just a hobby, it is their intended career. In order to achieve this goal, many study industrial design or go to art schools.
FIGURE 1
Innovative user design for a new basketball shoe inspired by iPod nano
(source: Niketalk, 2006)

FIGURE 2
User design which incorporates the picture of the Chinese opera mask
(source: Xinxin, 2005)

FIGURE 3
3D computerized rendering of a fictional basketball shoe including innovative lacing technology
(source: Niketalk, 2005)
Innovative Consumer Behavior in Online Communities

Maybe the most intriguing example illustrating the highly innovative and creative potential of community members is the story of “Alphaproject”. Jason Petrie, known under the username “Alphaproject”, continuously showcased his designs in the online community “Niketalk”. He was hired by a sporting goods company which was impressed by the creativity, skills and footwear-related knowledge displayed in his designs and nowadays works as a basketball footwear designer for Nike, the most prestigious brand for basketball enthusiasts (Kicksguide, 2003). In addition, the high quality of ideas and their desirability for manufacturers was confirmed by four experienced product managers of a leading sporting goods company to whom we showed the user designs and with whom we conducted interviews.

While English- and Chinese-speaking communities are similar in their highly impressive creative output, we found that the designs they develop differ in some ways. In Chinese-speaking communities, innovators sometimes incorporate cultural aspects, such as Chinese characters, into their creative designs. For instance, the design in figure 2 is based on the colour and symbolism of the Chinese opera mask. The mask can be seen when looking at the shoe from top as well as on the side of the box.

The Innovation Process: In the beginning of the innovation process, a creative idea comes from one member of the community, stimulated either by a shoe review, a perceived need, or the inner desire to engage in a challenging, innovative activity. The innovator then draws from his creativity and skills to transfer his idea into an innovative design. In this activity, unarticulated knowledge about basketball such as perceptions of the latest footwear trends and design preferences flows in. Typically, as soon as members have a creative idea, they become so dedicated to their innovation activity that a first draft is posted often within hours, as shown by the statement of one member who plans to skip sleeping in favor of developing a new design:

Working on mine right now...don’t know how long it will take but...should be on here by the end of the night!!

Once an innovator has transferred his ideas into designs, they are shared freely within the community. Typically, reactions to the designs follow promptly. Other members share their honest opinions, give fair evaluations of the new idea, come up with suggestions for improvements, and state their ideas regarding other potential ideas. The feedback is generally appreciated, as it motivates and challenges the innovator to come up with improved ideas:

Thanks man, that really helps and motivates me. I will keep it up. I’m trying to develop a “fast, swift” look, but it’s hard without having a pointy toe I guess. I’ll work on it.

Besides the competent feedback, a main element of most responses to newly posted designs is encouragement to continue innovating.

Continue producing your masterpieces and thank you for always sharing with the community!

Since different members of the communities have different backgrounds, knowledge, experiences, values, skills, and needs they expose the innovator to a variety of problems and alternative solutions. This in turn inspires the innovator to come up with even more creative solutions. Typically, revised versions of the initial design are posted shortly thereafter, as shown by the humorous reaction of an innovator who received numerous suggestions for improvements:

I think I will be redoing mine tonight, as it is tough for me to accept this much of an ass kickin’!

Also other designers may be inspired by the proposals of others and come up with even more radical innovations:

Seems very simple: if the sockliner and a unit at the heel lead to very responsive cushioning wouldn’t an extra full-length unit make it even more responsive?

Besides contributing their knowledge, another important function of the less skilled community members is to admire the designers, provide recognition, and take the role of fans (McAlexander et al. 2002). Designers who repeatedly showcase creative designs are awarded for their efforts and contributions with a certain degree of prestige and status within the community.

I’ve been a big fan of yours since you posted those VC removable Shox. These are VERY nice shoes man.

Through the intense interaction of members who contribute different essential elements to the innovation process, and through repeated feedback and revision, designs eventually evolve that are superior to those that would have been developed by just a single...
user. Some members are even convinced that their ideas could compete with the offerings of professional manufacturers:

Too bad we can’t get all these heads together and start our own shoe company! That would be the you know what!

In English-speaking online communities, in addition to the innovative ideas that appear “out of nowhere”, numerous ideas emerge in a structured process in which innovations are restricted to a certain topic and time frame. To increase the challenge and fun when making renderings, innovators of English-speaking online communities from time to time initiate so-called “Designer’s Roll Calls”. In these friendly competitions a community member assigns a specific innovation task, for example “design the basketball shoe for the year 2050”, and then the creative members of the community try to fulfill this task. However, when doing so they have to work within certain constraints or toward clearly defined goals or they have to incorporate certain features into their designs (e.g. “your design should have a lace cover”), and are even given deadlines. This competitive character constantly challenges the participants’ creativity, and thus leads to submissions which impress through their high level of creativity:

whoa…I really think that ALL the submissions from you guys are incredible! wow!! there ain’t never gonna be a shortage of creative talent in here.

Despite the high quality of their ideas, innovative members are not only willing to share their knowledge within their online communities but also externally. Several examples indicate that user-innovators are willing to collaborate with companies free of cost. For example, numerous members send their designs to companies in hope that some of their ideas are realized. Other innovative members submit their designs for a contest on “Kicksguide.com”, a private website dedicated to basketball shoes. They hope that one of their designs will be elected as the “Artist Series Shoe Design of the Year", and as the site submits the winning design to various sporting goods companies-their creative and innovative talent will be recognized by a company looking for new designers.

**DISCUSSION**

As shown by our study, consumers encountered in online basketball communities are highly creative. The innovative output of community members is impressive in its high quality and quantity. However, community members not only conceptualize innovate ideas for new products, but also use their creativity to modify or individualize their own basketball shoes. In this regard, their creativity is a form of self-expression and social communication (Burroughs and Mick 2004; Holt 1997).

Although online communities are linked only virtually, the process of innovation resembles creative processes observed in teams in traditional working environments (Amabile et al. 1996). Members become aware of existing problems and needs by exchanging experiences and points of view, as well as by reporting innovative product uses (Hirschman 1980; Price and Ridgway 1983). As soon as creative members find a solution, idea, concept, or product design, it is presented to the community, either in verbal descriptions or visual designs. Through the ongoing dialogue, creative community members are constantly challenged. They rethink their innovations with respect to the suggestions made and thereby generate new and more appropriate ideas or find solutions for previously unsolved problems. In addition, presenting new innovations motivates other community members to build on those ideas. Finally, new products emerge that are superior to those that would have been invented by a single user and superior to the sum of the individual outputs (Sawhney and Prandelli 2000).

An interesting, so far unexplored, pattern of innovation is the so-called “Designer’s Roll Calls” pattern. To make innovation more challenging, some English-speaking online communities initiate professionally conducted design competitions. While on one hand, “Designer’s Roll Calls” help to set clear goals, on the other hand they limit members’ creative output to a certain category. In many cases, such constraints actually seem to increase the community’s creativity (Moreau and Dahl 2005). Within creative online basketball communities, aesthetics, in form of appealing shoe design renderings, seem to be the link between problem solving and creative play (Burroughs and Mick 2004).

As shown, consumer communities provide a conducive culture for creative behavior. They deliver a social environment full of encouragement, challenge, and support, similar to working contexts demanded for creative teams (Perry-Smith and Shally 2003; Taggar 2002). Creative talent helps community members to become known and to maintain and receive respect and status from the peer group. Similar to early adopters (Rogers 1995), creative community members are often asked for advise and therefore tend to be opinion leaders. They seem to have an influence on the community’s aesthetic taste, be able to create certain product desires and trends, and through their opinion, influence the success or failure of new product introductions.

In contrast to Lead Users, who innovate because they derive benefits from using the solutions themselves (von Hippel 1986), consumers in online settings engage in joint innovation activities mainly because it is fun, considered to be a rewarding activity in itself, and perceived as a possibility to learn and to show-off their knowledge.

Despite the fact that virtual space brings together consumers irrespective of their geographical region, our study shows that culture still has an influence not only on the kind of creative output, but also on the creative process (Lubart 1999).

While this study gives first insights into innovation within online consumer groups and provides a lot of plausible evidence that online consumer groups are a promising source of innovation, further research is required to produce more generalizable and quantifiable results. Based on our findings, it would be interesting to examine whether other online communities centering around physical consumer goods (e.g. mobile phones, cameras, or skis), demonstrate similar patterns of innovation and creative potential.

**REFERENCES**


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ABSTRACT
This paper presents two online variations of the laddering interviewing technique to reveal the preferred attributes of an iconic music player. The results suggest that the proposed methods (online laddering interviews and questionnaires) can be transferred successfully to an online environment to combine the effectiveness of qualitative research with the efficiency of quantitative research. While the online laddering interviews produced significantly more depth in understanding, the results of the two online laddering methods are broadly similar. The results indicate that consumers particularly value the control elements of the music player such as the click wheel and the menu navigation, the sound quality, and its aesthetical design.

INTRODUCTION
Although qualitative researchers have already discovered the usefulness of the internet to design and conduct qualitative research projects and increasingly use online data collection methods to benefit from time and cost savings, authors such as Comley (2002) rightly point out that researchers have been using online qualitative research at a significantly slower pace than online quantitative. By using online qualitative research methods, qualitative researchers could benefit in several ways. According to Joinson (2001) respondents reveal more personal information in computer-mediated communication than in traditional face-to-face discussions due to visual anonymity and higher levels of private self-awareness. Similarly, Hanna et al. (2005) found that respondents are more likely to express their deeper feelings in an online environment than during traditional interviews. As respondents are also less inhibited online, they are willing to state their opinions more directly than in a traditional interviewing environment (Pincott and Branthwaite 2000; Sweet 2001; Tse 1999).

Online qualitative research methods allow researchers to sample minority and professional groups that would otherwise be difficult to contact. Individuals who spend a lot of their free time online may not be willing to have personal face-to-face interviews with researchers but may be interested in online interviews. Miller and Dickson (2001, 146) support this view by saying that online qualitative research is appropriate “when the target population is small, very specialized in its skills, and difficult to find and recruit, and when the issue relates to high-tech products and services”.

Based on these initial findings and following O’Connor and Madge (2003) who suggest that the topic of online qualitative research should attract more attention, we decided to use the established qualitative laddering technique in an online environment to get a deeper understanding of an interesting consumer phenomenon—Apple’s iPod. Apple has effectively redefined the portable music market by creating an entirely new market segment. According to a recent Forrester report (Collingwood 2005), the iPod accounts for around three quarters of the digital music players market in the United States. For a thirty year old company, this was, however, particularly appropriate to this research area as we explain below.

THE LADDERING TECHNIQUE
Reynolds, Dethloff, and Westberg (2001) point out that the laddering method can be distinguished from typical qualitative research methods in the following way: the laddering method has a definite structure as interviewers use standard probing questions, follow an explicit agenda, and the questioning flows much the same for each interview. Reynolds et al. (2001, 99) also argue that “the qualitative results from a laddering structure are deep and focused while a typical qualitative structure are shallow and broad”. Thus, the laddering method can be described as a structured qualitative method that leads to deep and focused results. Laddering allows researchers to reach deeper levels of reality and to reveal the “reasons behind the reasons” (Engler, Mulvey, and Ogilvethorpe 1999, 17). Researchers can examine the consumer’s individuality in depth while still producing quantifiable results. Although originally used for product or brand positioning issues (Gutman 1982; Olson and Reynolds 1983), in succeeding years it has been applied to a range of areas such as consumer behavior (Bagozzi and Dabholkar 1994; Pieters, Botschen, and Thelen 1998).

Laddering is normally done in person and involves semi-standardized in-depth interviews, where respondents are restricted as little as possible in their natural flow of speech. Laddering interviews attempt to discover the salient meanings that consumers associate with products, services and behaviors and to reveal so-called means-end chains. The focus is on the associations in the consumer’s mind between the attributes of products, services or behaviors, which are the “means”, the consequences of these attributes for the consumer, and the personal values or beliefs, the “ends”, which are satisfied by the consequences. While the attributes are the characteristics of a product or service, the consequences are the reasons why an attribute is important. They are the psychological or physiological aspects which motivate a customer...
to use a product or service (Gutman 1982). Values are a more
universal concept and may be considered as life goals; personal and
general consequences individuals are striving for in their lives
(Rokeach 1973). The linkages between attributes, consequences
and values are what produce the means-end chains. Consumer
knowledge is assumed to be hierarchically organized in the
consumer’s memory spanning different levels of abstraction
(Reynolds, Gengler, and Howard 1995); the higher the level of
abstraction, the stronger the connection to the self. Thus a hierarchy
exists with attributes (low level of abstraction) as less relevant to the
self than consequences (mid level of abstraction) and values being
of most relevance (high level of abstraction) (Olson and Reynolds
1983).

All laddering interviews consist of an elicitation and laddering
stage (Grunert and Gruner 1995). Initially an elicitation stage,
which may use techniques such as triadic sorting, direct elicitation
or free sorting to derive preference based distinction criteria is
undertaken. Criteria thus derived act as the starting point for the
laddering probes, which should eventually uncover attribute-con-
sequence-value chains. This is achieved through repeatedly asking
questions as to why an attribute/consequence/value is important to
the respondent with the answer serving as the starting point for the
next question. Interviewers use these probe questions to reveal
attribute-consequence-value chains by taking the subject up a so
called ladder of abstraction, starting with concrete attributes and
ending with abstract values. The laddering process continues until
respondents give either circular answers, or are not able or willing
to answer or have reached the value level.

Although the majority of published studies use in-depth
laddering interviews, there has been some use of the paper-and-
pencil version of laddering (Walker and Olson 1991) with the
advantages mainly being reduction of interviewer bias and ease in
management (Botschen and Hemetsberger 1998). Respondents are
asked to fill in a structured questionnaire and to write down up to
four attributes that are of relevance and then specify why a certain
attribute is important to them. For each attribute, respondents can
give up to three reasons (Botschen and Hemetsberger 1998).

ONLINE LADDERING

The two laddering methods of data collection (personal inter-
views and paper-and-pencil version) can also be adapted to online
laddering chats and questionnaires. Laddering interviews can be
conducted online in the form of online chats. These one-on-one
electronic in-depth interviews may be carried out in the form of
text-, audio- or video-chats. We decided to conduct text-based
chats because this format allows us to ask questions that
respondents give either circular answers, or are not able or willing
to answer or have reached the value level.

For our study, we invited German users of the Apple iPod
to a web-based research approach would be particularly appropriate for
possible participants (Bryman 2004, 475). We thought that a web-
based research approach would be particularly appropriate for
researching the iPod for a variety of reasons; music can only be
downloaded onto the iPod through a computer and the iTunes
software and in order to purchase music through iTunes, the iPod
user requires a connection to the Internet. Moreover, iPod users
would have been difficult to contact otherwise.

For our study, we invited German users of the Apple iPod
music player to fill in a web survey that covered topics such as
satisfaction with the iPod in general and with its product attributes

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THE STUDY

As stated, we were particularly interested in developing a
deeper understanding of how consumers value in an innovative
lifestyle product such as Apple’s iPod. We aimed at investigating
the desired attributes of the iPod and the underlying benefits that
users look for to better understand this consumer phenomenon. In
addition we wanted to see how successful the traditional laddering
technique might be once transferred to an online environment, and
compare laddering interviews and questionnaires as two online
methods.

Grunert and Gruner (1995) suggest that researchers using
laddering should collect data from a homogeneous group of respon-
dents. A suitable approach for identifying a suitable group of
homogeneous respondents is the selection of opinion leaders.
Because opinion leaders exercise informal influence upon other
peoples’ behaviors and attitudes through product-related conversa-
tions (Goldsmith and De Witt 2003), they are considered attractive
targets for marketing communication (Stern and Gould 1988), as
well as for the adoption and diffusion of newly developed products
(Chan and Misra 1990). Providing information or advice perceived
as more credible than mass advertising opinion leaders can inform-
ally influence others’ attitudes and behaviors (Stern and Gould
1988). Opinion leaders are particularly important for the success of
new products, as when they are among the early adopters them-

eselves, they pass on important information to opinion seekers
(Flynn, Goldsmith, and Eastman 1996).

Thus, we decided to draw our sample for the online laddering
interviews and questionnaires from a group of opinion leaders in the
specific product field of MP3 players. Following Creswell (2003,
4) who believes that the idea of applying only quantitative or
qualitative methods “falls short of the major approaches being used
today in the social and human sciences”, we decided to employ a
quantitative web survey serving “as a springboard for identifying
possible participants” (Bryman 2004, 475). We thought that a web-
based research approach would be particularly appropriate for
researching the iPod for a variety of reasons; music can only be
downloaded onto the iPod through a computer and the iTunes
software and in order to purchase music through iTunes, the iPod
user requires a connection to the Internet. Moreover, iPod users
would have been difficult to contact otherwise.

For our study, we invited German users of the Apple iPod
music player to fill in a web survey that covered topics such as
satisfaction with the iPod in general and with its product attributes
in particular (e.g., design, usability etc.), and importance of iPod product attributes. The web survey also included an opinion leadership scale to identify the homogeneous group of opinion leaders. The opinion leadership scale we applied was originally constructed by Flynn et al. (1996) consisting of six items. Our scale was adjusted by including a ‘no answer’ option to exclude those participants who would otherwise only consider the end points of the scale. The Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient for our opinion leadership scale was .73.

A total of 2,472 people participated in our web survey and 2,178 (88% out of 2,472) of them provided complete answers to the opinion leadership scale. From the 317 respondents that scored highest on this scale, 273 (86% out of 317) agreed to be contacted for a further study and 198 of them were not only opinion leaders but also owners of an iPod and regular users of instant messenger software.

Concerning minimum sample size, Reynolds et al. (2001) recommend that ladder studies should, as a rule of thumb, include at least 20 respondents. This sample size could already give a significant understanding of the main attributes, consequences, and values of products, services or people. As a consequence, we conducted 22 online laddering interviews and 26 respondents filled in the online ladder questionnaire.

As our research study was concerned with identifying the attributes of the iPod that users value the most, we asked all respondents to tell us the three most important attributes of their iPod. This simple technique of direct questioning was sufficient to elicit salient attributes of the iPod and what distinguishes it from its competitors. The derived criteria were then the starting point for the laddering probes to uncover the complete means-end structure. For this, both interviews and the online laddering questionnaire began with one attribute and asked: “Why is attribute X important to you?” with the answer to this question serving as the starting point for further questioning.

**ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

We coded sequences of attributes, consequences and values (the ladders) to make comparisons across respondents. We used the decision-support software program LADDERMAP (Gengler and Reynolds 1993) to enter up to ten chunks of meaning per ladder with the categorization of each phrase as either an attribute, consequence or value. Then we identified and grouped meaningful categories. Codes for individual means-end chains were aggregated and expressed in an implications matrix which details the associations between the constructs. The implications matrix acts as a bridge between the qualitative and quantitative elements of the technique by showing the number of times one code leads to another (Deeter-Schmelz, Kennedy, and Goebel 2002). A graphical representation of the aggregate chains was presented in a Hierarchical Value Map (HVM) that consists of nodes, which stand for the most important attributes/consequences/values (conceptual meanings) and lines, which represent the linkages between the concepts. A hierarchical value map only displays associations beyond a specific “cutoff” level, which means that associations have to be mentioned by a certain number of respondents in order to be graphically represented.

Two resulting HVMs detailing the online laddering interviews and questionnaires are described below. They only display concepts of meaning (attributes, consequences, and values) and associations beyond cutoff level 2, meaning that concepts and linkages had to be mentioned by at least 2 respondents to be represented.

The size of the circles in figure 1 stand for the frequency respondents brought up a certain concept. The most important attribute is labeled “control elements (n=20)”, this includes aspects such as the menu navigation. The thickness lines represents relative frequency of association between the concepts of meaning, so for example, the attribute “control elements (n=20)”, the consequence “ease of use (n=18)” and the value “feeling good (n=10)” are strongly linked. Of the eleven attributes mentioned by respondents, the two most frequent were “control elements (n=20)” and “design (n=16)”. This result is not surprising as both attributes of the iPod are frequently discussed as being responsible to a large extent for distinguishing the iPod from competitor’s products. Secondly, both attributes represent a variety of aspects. For example, “control elements” subsumes hardware aspects, such as the ‘click wheel’ control, software aspects, such as the menu navigation, as well as the ease with which an iPod can be connected to additional accessories through a standard connection ‘dock connector’. A key attribute of importance for iPod users is clearly its design. The iPod is not only easy to use but it also makes its users feel proud, which, in turn, helps them to feel good. The iPod’s design satisfies user’s desire for beauty and helps them to feel individual. This is in line with the three dimensions of product design outlined by Norman (2005), namely the visceral, behavioural and reflective components, which are interwoven in any product design. While visceral design is concerned with appearance, behavioural design is related to the effectiveness of use and the pleasure related to the product. Finally, reflective design “considers the rationalization and intellectualization of a product” (Norman 2005, 5). The direct linkages between the attributes “design” and “image” and the values “beauty” and “individuality” support findings by Mort and Rose (2004) who discovered that for hedonistic products (products that consumers purchase for pleasure only) direct attribute-value connections are more common than indirect attribute-consequence-value linkage.

Respondents also value the iPod’s good sound quality that allows them to enjoy music and to relax. The iPod’s ease of use and simplicity also helps users relax and enjoy life and have fun (“hedonism”). In addition, users can then save time, which allows them to devote attention to other issues (“center on other issues”). Further, the iPod’s reliability creates a feeling of security.

The HVM based on the online laddering questionnaires is less complex than the HVM of the online interviews: While the interview HVM displays 23 concepts of meaning (seven attributes, eleven consequences, and five values), the questionnaire HVM only reveals 16 concepts (six attributes, seven consequences, and three values). The interview HVM displays more associations between concepts than the HVM based on the questionnaires (25 associations in comparison to 16).

The two concepts that appear in the questionnaire HVM but not in the interview HVM, namely “handiness” and “mobility”, were also mentioned during the online interviews but do appear in the corresponding HVM due to the chosen cutoff level. As stated, the HVM only displays associations that a certain number of respondents mentioned. Thus, only a few respondents mentioned these concepts during the interviews. Similarly, the concepts that appear in the interview HVM but not in the questionnaire HVM were also mentioned in the questionnaires but are not displayed in the HVM due to the cutoff level. Apart from these differences, however, the results from both laddering techniques are generally similar.

Table 1 shows that far more concepts of meaning (attributes, consequences, and values) were elicited during online laddering interviews than in the online laddering questionnaires. In particular, respondents mentioned twice as many values during the online interviews as in the questionnaires. It seems to be more difficult for respondents to climb the ladder of abstraction and to elicit associa-
Conducting Qualitative Research Online

In laddering interviews, interviewers can employ several laddering techniques (Reynolds and Gutman 1988) to help respondents reach the value level. These techniques cannot be employed in laddering questionnaires.

Table 2 shows that a total of 71 ladders were collected from the chats and the 22 respondents provided between two and five ladders each, with an average of 3.25 ladders per respondent. The longest ladder consisted of six concepts of meaning (attributes, consequences, and values) and the shortest two, with an average of 3.2.

By comparison, a total of 70 ladders were collected from the online laddering questionnaires and the 26 respondents provided between one and four ladders each, with an average of 2.7 ladders per respondent. The longest ladder consisted of four concepts of meaning (attributes, consequences, and values) and the shortest two, with an average of 3.2.
meaning (attributes, consequences, and values) and the shortest two, with an average of 2.6. These results demonstrate that researchers can collect significantly more ladders (in total and per person) and concepts of meaning during personal online laddering interviews than with the online application of the paper and pencil version of laddering. The ladders collected from the online interviews are also on average longer than the ladders from the online questionnaires.

**CONCLUDING STATEMENT**

The aim of the study was to give a first valuable in-depth insight into what matters for iPod users by revealing several important constructs. These have been highlighted above. We also wished to see how successful the traditional laddering technique could be in an online environment. The quality of the results suggests that the traditional laddering technique can be transferred successfully to an online environment. While the online laddering interviews produced significantly more depth in understanding, the results of the two online laddering methods are broadly similar. In addition to displaying the most important attributes of the iPod, the two hierarchical value maps also showed why they are important. In this way, the HVM offered a deeper understanding of the attributes of the iPod that users desire by graphically illustrating the underlying benefits that users look for. By including an opinion leadership scale in an initial web survey, we were able to sample a homogeneous group of respondents for the following online laddering interviews and questionnaires. These online laddering techniques allowed an inexpensive and fast collection of qualitative data. There was no need to tape and transcribe online interviews as transcripts were automatically generated, which allowed a quick data analysis. The filled in online questionnaires were also available in electronic form, which made a quick analysis of the laddering data possible. Moreover, by applying the laddering technique to an online environment we were able to gather information from an interesting group of respondents that would have been difficult to contact otherwise. The whole online laddering process was convenient for respondents who did not have to leave their homes and offices for the interviews and questionnaires.

**LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This study was explorative in nature as it was the first to apply two online versions of the laddering technique to the issue of desired attributes of an innovative product—Apple’s iPod. Further research studies, however, should improve our knowledge of this topic. There are a number of limitations to this work that have to be discussed and we make some suggestions for further research.

A general problem with online research is that it excludes all those individuals who are not online and it is known that these individuals differ from their offline counterparts. For example, the demographic profile of online users does not represent the population at large (Duffy et al. 2005). Thus, online samples are not representative of the population and findings can neither be generalized to the population nor to alternative populations. In this connection, our results are limited by the nature of our sample. Firstly, the study was conducted in Germany, where the iPod has a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Concepts of Meaning</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concepts</td>
<td>Times mentioned in ladders</td>
<td>Concepts</td>
<td>Times mentioned in ladders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Interviews</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online Questionnaires</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**TABLE 1**

Comparison of Attributes, Consequences, and Values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of ladders</th>
<th>Number of ladders per respondent</th>
<th>Number of concepts of meaning (A/C/V)</th>
<th>Number of concepts of meaning per ladder (=Length of ladder)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Min</td>
<td>Max</td>
<td>Average</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online Interviews</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Questionnaires</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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lower market share in comparison to the United States. In Germany, the market share of the iPod is estimated to be around 50% (Kaufmann 2005). Furthermore, the study applies an online laddering technique and is therefore limited to iPod users that have access to the Internet. However, both limitations are not considered to be serious as Apple is still the market leader in Germany, albeit by a lower margin compared to some other countries. Similarly, limiting the study to an online context is acceptable as it was a central aim of the study to identify opinion leaders, rather than a representative group of iPod users. However, it is important to note that the results should not be directly compared to those achieved through an offline study, which might result in a different type of opinion leaders. In order to answer this question, a similar study would have to be conducted offline, based on the same opinion-leader selection.

Concerning the depth of insights gained from online research, Sweet (2001, 134) believes that “real-time online groups may not always provide the depth of response necessary”. By contrast, Reid and Reid (2005), who compared the contributions of face-to-face focus groups with focus groups conducted via computer-mediated communication, found that both approaches generated the same number of answers/new ideas. Thus, further research should investigate this issue and explore whether online methods provide more or less insights than traditional methods.

The analysis of the online laddering questionnaires indicates that only a few respondents were able to reach the highest level of abstraction, explaining the lack in codes at the value level. However, in comparable traditional paper-and-pencil laddering studies (e.g., Botschen and Hemetsberger 1998; Pieters et al. 1998) respondents were also only able to come up with few values like “feeling good”, “harmony with yourself”, and “satisfaction”. All personal construct approaches depend on the ability and willingness of respondents to reveal their individuality, reflect on their knowledge, and verbalize their experiences. Banister et al. (1994), however, point out that many people may find it difficult to verbalize their experiences and to reflect on their behaviors and attitudes. This may explain why only few respondents who filled in the online laddering questionnaires mentioned values. Without the guidance of interviewers most respondents were not able climb the ladder of abstraction.

After having shown that the qualitative laddering technique can be combined successfully with a quantitative survey to reveal the preferred attributes of an iconic brand and market leader and uncover the underlying benefits sought by Apple iPod users we hope that fellow researchers develop further studies that use the two online versions of the laddering technique to investigate interesting consumer phenomena.

REFERENCES


SESSION SUMMARY

The concept of home represents one of the fundamental structures of orientation in time and space (Altman and Werner 1985), a salient aspect of the extended self (McCracken 1989; Tian and Belk 2004), as well as an important context of consumer decision-making and commercial exchange (Frenzen and Davis 1990; Grayson 1998). Contemporary life conditions have transformed emic notions of home and have increased the role of the market in the social construction of home (Bardhi and Arnould 2005; Miller 2001; Venkatesh et al. 2001). However consumer research on home and its influence on consumer behavior remain scarce. This special session attempts to a) examine the different influences that home has on certain consumer behavior aspects, such as consumption and meanings of technology, brand relationships and meanings, consumption of place, and family relationships; and b) advance our understanding of consumers’ relationships to meanings of home. Each of the papers in the session presents new, empirical studies.

The three papers in this session examine the relationship between home and consumer behavior in three diverse contexts under which the cultural framework of home becomes salient, such as cross-cultural consumer experiences as well as fragmented, mobile, and intergenerational families. More specifically, taking a domestic perspective, the first paper by Venkatraman, Coulter and Bardhi examines the relationship between home and technology among military families living in military posts. Through 18 interviews and observations with military wives, the paper demonstrates that consumption and meaning of technology in domestic spaces is influenced by consumers’ notions of home. Further, the meaning and use of technology are continuously negotiated as part a consumer identity project of sustaining the moral economy of the home, characterized as the identity project of being the “stoic military wife”. The second paper by Bengtsson and Venkatraman looks at home and brand consumption in the context of cross-cultural experiences. The study illustrates how consumers’ relationships to brands change during cross-cultural experiences. These relationships are shaped by a much valorized interpretative framework of home. They find that global brands can become home symbols for tourists abroad by providing them with a sense of order, predictability, and national identity. The third paper by Epp and Price is part of an ongoing research project on family identity based on 23 intergenerational family dyads. This study examines how family identity is acted out to make the home as well as the ways that home shapes the family identity. The study argues that family identity defines the meaning and value system of the home and sets the spatial and relational boundaries of the home. As such, possessions and consumption practices associated with family identity come to symbolize and sustain the home through time and space.

This session contributes to consumer research in several ways. First, the papers illuminate two different ways that consumers relate to home. On one hand, home represents a moral and symbolic interpretative framework from which consumers draw meanings that shape consumption. As such, the session argues for the importance of research in developing cultural models of home from consumers’ perspective. On the other hand, these studies suggest that home is an important on-going consumer project carried out through consumption and as such not only structures consumer behavior related with it, but also is shaped by consumption processes. Second, these papers further suggest that the home models are situated in consumer’s socio-economic and childhood experiences. Third, the session shows that consideration of the home concept in consumer research shifts the research focus from an individual or a community unit of analysis to the much neglected mezzo level of family.

ABSTRACTS

“Harnessing the Power of Technology in the Home: The Case of Military Households in the US”
Meera Venkatraman, Suffolk University
Robin Coulter, University of Connecticut
Fleura Bardhi, Northeastern University

How do consumers integrate technology into the home? While prior research has investigated the ways technology has transformed the home, little is known about the ways that home shapes meanings and consumption of technology. Through a qualitative study of military families living in two different military posts, this research illustrates how meanings of home are being nuanced by technology and its use. More importantly, however, our research indicates the fundamental nature of technology to the meaning of home—to maintaining the day-to-day routines, nurturing the family, educating and entertaining the children, inculcating a sense of values, and sustaining the moral economy of the home.

“Consuming Global Brandscapes as Home”
Anders Bengtsson, Suffolk University
Meera Venkatraman, Suffolk University

This study examines the meanings consumers ascribe to global brands consumed in out-of-the ordinary settings. In an interpretive study of consumers temporarily crossing cultures from the U.S. to China, we show that contrary to conventional brand management dogma, brands take on different meanings when consumed in an unfamiliar context. Our study reveals that global brands take on the meaning of home not in the familial, material sense of the word, but in the phenomenological, metaphoric, and symbolic sense, and this home became a means for consumers to reconstitute their sense of self and make sense of their culture-crossing experience.

“Performing Home: The Storied Life of Objects, Spaces, and Identity Practices”
Amber M. Epp, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Linda L. Price, University of Arizona

Given the importance of home to consumers and the tightly linked ideologies of home, family, and identity (Carsten 2004; McCracken 1989; Oswald 1999), we examined how constellations of spaces, objects, and identity practices shape the participatory roles of particular consumption objects in the performance of home. Based on a longitudinal case study and 48 depth interviews with 21 families, we uncovered variations in family identity that are reflected in goals for the articulation of home. In addition, we observed that contextual shifts as well as object–spatial constellations that alter the roles of objects may in turn modify and displace self, relational, and family identity practices over time.

References Available on Request!
SESSION INTRODUCTION
The idea that countercultural consumer movements permeate into the commercial mainstream is a staple notion in sociology and cultural studies (e.g., Hebdige 1979; Frank 1997; Gladwell 1997; Heath and Potter 2004). This idea of co-optation is also central to consumer culture theory (e.g., Schouten and McAlexander 1995; McCracken 1997; Kozinets 2002; Holt 2002). Together, these existing studies present two alternative theoretical explanations of co-optation. Either countercultural movements are autonomous systems where consumers enjoy community, gift giving, and cultural creativity until commercialism creeps in and destroys the counterculture’s subversive distinctiveness (Gladwell 1997; Hebdige 1979). Or countercultural rebellion “simply feeds the flames of consumer capitalism”, creating a whole new set of positional goods for these new rebel consumers to compete for” (Health and Potter 2004, 322).

This session, a joint effort by scholars in sociology, cultural studies, and consumer culture theory, will present recent advances in co-optation theory grounded in three completed empirical studies. From our perspective, existing theories are predisposed to interpret co-optation as an overly functionally integrated and internally consistent process of cultural mainstreaming, and conversely to overlook some of its commercial and political qualities. Our interdisciplinary reading offers a critical rethinking of many now taken-for-granted assumptions about cultural rebellion, creative consumption, the process of co-optation, and, more broadly, marketplace politics itself.

We seek to re-conceptualize countercultural co-optation as a political process of shifting and perpetually morphing relationships between power and resistance and as a historical struggle of opposing cultural and commercial stakeholder groups over the normative definition of consumer practice. To pursue this goal, we present three completed empirical investigations of marketplace co-optation dynamics, one of which was conducted by two pioneering co-optation theorists in cultural studies. We develop a number of important theoretical and empirical implications following from these empirical studies to a variety of key consumer culture and cultural studies constructs.

Hebdige and Potter’s presentation will develop a critique of coolhunting and extension of subcultural mainstreaming in sociology and cultural studies. Coolhunting is usually interpreted as a corporate attempt to co-opt the styles and fashions of genuinely subversive subcultures. Yet it is important to note that “cool” itself is not subversive. To see this, Hebdige and Potter profile and systematize the amount of friction in the transmission of cultural information. It takes a long time for subcultural trends in fashion or music or speech to move from the streets of London or New York City to the suburban basements of Omaha or Ottawa. The phenomenon we call “cool” is a consequence of that friction. Coolhunters exploit the time lag for profit, and hipsters for the power to treat everyone else with contempt. Hebdige and Potter will draw from a variety of empirical sources to develop their alternative approach to countercultural co-optation.

Giesler and Luedicke’s presentation will develop the historical process of co-optation using seven-year ethnographic data set on the war on music downloading and the construct of marketplace drama, a fourfold series of antagonistic performances among opposing stakeholder groups of consumers and producers through which their divergent ideological goals are attained and the economic and competitive characteristics of specific market structures are transformed. This theoretical construct offers a useful mechanism for examining how a market system’s ideals and norms are historically institutionalized in a dramatic market narrative, which provides the dynamic meaning system in which the assimilation of subcultural consumption styles is situated.

Thompson and Coskuner-Balli’s paper explores countervailing market responses to corporate co-optation and the ideological recruitment of consumption communities. From a conventional theoretical standpoint, the corporatization of the organic food movement is a classic example of corporate cooptation. Co-optation theory conceptualizes the commercial marketplace as an ideological force that assimilates the symbols and practices of a counterculture into dominant norms. Their alternative argument is that co-optation can generate a countervailing market response that actively promotes the oppositional aspects of a counterculture attenuated by the process of commercial mainstreaming. They analyze community supported agriculture (CSA), which has emerged in response to the corporate cooptation of the organic food movement. They conclude by discussing how tacit political ideologies structure consumption communities.

We anticipate that the discussant, Doug Holt, will help the audience to debate issues such as: What is the relationship between consumers’ countercultural movements and the commercial market? What is the potential of countercultural movements to re-politicize their co-opted countercultural styles? What is the role of historical and political narratives in the cultural production and assimilation of countercultural consumption styles? The proposed session is a timely one with particular relevance to researchers interested in the relations between market politics and consumption. It should also greatly appeal to researchers who-in an effort to theorize consumer resistance, and market rebellion and evolution—are looking for contextual input from a variety of disciplinary sources outside of their own research paradigm. This session will help these researchers to consider the value of co-optation studies in their own research.

ABSTRACTS
“A Critical Reframing of Subcultural Cool and Consumption”
Dick Hebdige & Andrew Potter

The standard view of rebellious consumption and the dynamics of cool goes something like this: First a subculture arises around a certain style of rebellious consumption, such as punk rock, skateboarding, or organic produce. In its original form, this subculture is genuinely subversive; that is, it poses a genuine threat to the established capitalist order. But as the subculture becomes more popular, corporations move in. They take the elements of the subculture, bleach out the subversive elements, and sell a denuded, non-threatening version of the subculture to the masses. This is known as co-optation. Because of co-optation, anyone looking for a subversive (“cool”) subculture must constantly trying to keep one step ahead of the corporations (e.g., Hebdige 1979).

Unfortunately, this story is theoretically inaccurate. The idea of cool consumption as essentially political has been around since the 1800s, but it became a defining part of our cultural self-
understanding in the 1950s. It is also one of the most misguided political poses of the past half century (Heath and Potter 2004). Norman Mailer set the agenda for cool in the 1950s, when he wrote that society was divided into two types of people: the Hip (“rebels”) and the Square (“conformists”) (Mailer 1954). Cool (or hip, alternative, edgy) here becomes the universal stance of individualism, with the hipster as the resolute nonconformist refusing to bend before the homogenizing forces of mass society (Gladwell 1997).

This is to say that the notion of cool only ever made sense as a foil to something else, i.e. a culture dominated by mass media such as national television stations, wide-circulation magazines and newspapers, and commercial record labels. For the counterculture, mass society was displeasing not only aesthetically, but politically as well. The media were particularly noxious, as the primary mechanism through which elites hold on to power. The people are kept pacified by sitcoms, terrified by the nightly news, and satisfied by the products sold on the ads in between. The hipster makes a political statement by rejecting mass society and its conformist agenda (Heath and Potter 2004).

But the truth is, cool is not political. Never was. What it has been, for most of the past 40 years, is the central form of status in urban life. To see this, we show empirically that there was always a tremendous amount of friction in the transmission of cultural information. It took a long time for subcultural trends in fashion or music or speech to move from the streets of London or New York City to the suburban basements of Omaha or Ottawa. The phenomenon we call “cool” was a historical consequence of that friction. We show how past coolhunters exploited this time lag for profit, and hipsters for the power to treat everyone else with contempt.

Next we show that the old mass-media ecosystem has disappeared, replaced by the rip/mix/burn culture of the Internet with its blogs and podcasts, in which there is no longer any distinction between producers and consumers. Trends appear as nothing more than brief consumerist shivers, passé the moment they appear, like last year’s Kelly Green colour craze or 2003’s Ugg boots (Gladwell 1997).

The prevailing aesthetic is not cool, but quirky, dominated by unpredictable and idiosyncratic mash-ups of cultural elements that bear no meaningful relationship to one another. Appreciating the anti-logic of quirk is the only way to navigate the movies of Wes Anderson (Jeff Goldblum in an anti-logic of quirk is the only way to navigate the movies of Wes Anderson). Cool (or hip, alternative, edgy) here becomes the universal stance of individualism, with the hipster as the resolute nonconformist refusing to bend before the homogenizing forces of mass society (Gladwell 1997).

In this presentation, we develop the construct of marketplace drama to show how and why a countercultural consumption style permeates into the commercial mainstream. We define a marketplace drama as a fourfold series of antagonistic performances among opposing stakeholder groups of consumers and producers through which their divergent ideological goals are attained and the economic and competitive characteristics of specific market structures are transformed. This construct offers a useful mechanism for examining how a market system’s ideals and norms are historically institutionalized in a dramatic market narrative, which provides the dynamic meaning system in which the emergence and assimilation of subcultural consumption styles is situated.

We develop this alternative theorization of the co-optation process through a dramaturgical analysis of the seven-year cultural conflict that unfolded after the emergence of music downloading. Based on conceptual findings from social and consumer drama theory, we trace the multi-year co-optation of music downloading from its beginning in 1999 to the present and reveals some of the cultural and political dynamics involved in the struggle between corporate music executives seeking to assimilate downloading andダウンロードers seeking to re-politicize their co-opted consumption meanings and styles. We find that down loaders and corporate music executives draw from a shared music market narrative of Intellectual Civilization. This narrative valorizes (and invites market agents to actively engage in) the bridging of seemingly contradictory cultural ideals of musical sharing and owning as heroic performance. By prescribing a balance between musical owning and sharing, this music market narrative has driven the integration of music downloading into commodified forms over four dramatic phases of breach, crisis, redress, and reintegration.

Classic co-optation theorists will always be haunted by their inability to transcend the artificially stark distinction between countercultural rebellion, on the one hand, and the commercial marketplace, on the other. Postmodern co-optation theorists will always be haunted by their inability to step out of the paradox of countercultural rebellion as hip bourgeois consumerism. Both existing co-optation theories conceptualize the co-optation process historically as a unidirectional move toward commercialization. In contradistinction, our alternative theorization of the co-optation process shows that marketplace dramas harbor powerful contradictions linked to diverse market interests. These contradictions provide points of ideological instability that motivate alternative calculations about price-value relationships that, in turn, set the stage for alternative market innovations. We develop co-optation as an open-ended marketplace power struggle that unfolds in dramatic cycles over four acts of breach, crisis, redress, and reintegration. Together, these findings place co-optation at the heart of marketplace change, understood as a co-evolutionary dynamic between a dramatic market narrative and marketplace structure.

“Countervailing Market Responses to Corporate Co-optation and the Ideological Recruitment of Consumption Communities”
Craig Thompson & Gokcen Cokcuiner-Balli

What a long strange trip it has been. Over the course of three decades, organic foods—a totem of the 1960’s anti-establishment, anti-corporate, anti-conformist, counterculture—have become staple items for trendy upscale retailers like Whole Foods and widely
distributed through an array of premium priced brands. And now, Wal-Mart is pushing organic food further into the consumer mainstream. As Pollan (2006, p. 16) reports, “Wal-Mart plans to roll out a complete selection of organic foods — food certified by the U.S.D.A. to have been grown without synthetic pesticides or fertilizers — in its nearly 4,000 stores. Just as significant, the company says it will price all this organic food at an eye-poppingly tiny premium over its already-cheap conventional food.”

From a conventional theoretical standpoint, the corporatization of the organic food movement is merely another chapter in the ongoing saga of countercultural co-optation at the hands of corporate capitalism. A key premise of co-optation theory is that the capitalist marketplace transforms the symbols and practices of countercultural opposition into a constellation of trendy commodities and de-politicized fashion styles that are readily assimilated into the societal mainstream (Clarke 2003; Ewen 1988; Hebdige 1979). However, co-optation theory ascribes little or no potential for members and participants of a counterculture to reclaim and re-politicize their co-opted symbols and practices.

For this reason, co-optation theory would not have predicted that the corporatization of organic food would have engendered a thriving countervailing market system—Community Supported Agriculture (hereafter CSA)—which has staked out a viable market niche for small, independent farmers by aggressively reasserting the countercultural values and ideals that originally animated the organic food movement. CSA widely promotes itself as an alternative to the organic foods now produced under the auspices of corporate conglomerates (Coleman 2002). Over 1500 CSA farms are now in operation throughout North America (Weise 2005).

In this presentation, we will first review the leading conceptualizations of corporate co-optation and highlight their theoretical omissions regarding the dynamics of countervailing market responses. Next, we explore the ways in which CSA has turned the corporate co-optation of the organic food movement to its own ideological advantage and, second, the alternative producer and consumer outlooks (and communal experiences) that are forged within these countervailing market-mediated relationships. We further explicate how this ideological inversion creates alignments between CSA farmers’ economic interests and CSA consumers’ perceptions of value. These ideological alignments are particularly interesting in the CSA case because this market system is designed to favor farmers’ economic interests while placing constraints on many taken-for-granted forms of consumer sovereignty.

Our formulation stands in theoretical contrast to classic co-optation theory which portrays the founding members of a counterculture as self-producers who create their own fashion styles and who exchange art and other cultural artifacts through informal gift economy networks. This version of the co-optation thesis is a tale of creeping commercialism which steadily erodes a counterculture’s subservative distinctiveness and the socio-political force of its symbolic protests Clark 2003; Ewen 1988; Gladwell 1997; Hebdige 1979; Rushkoff and Barak 2001. We also challenge the hip consumer variation of co-optation theory which posits that a common ideological orientation (i.e., hip bourgeois consumerism) underlies the activities of both small countercultural entrepreneurs and multinational corporations who latter promote these aesthetic sensibilities to the commercial mainstream (Frank 1997; Heath and Potter 2004).

By conceptualizing commercialism as a hegemon, social theorists will almost invariably reach the conclusion that a given counterculture has either been bought out (i.e., the classic co-optation thesis) or that it has always been part of the system capitalism (e.g., counterculture as hypocritical bourgeois affectation). Building on Sassen (2005), we contend that more nuanced analyses are needed to advance understanding of the structural relations, dialectical tensions, and ideological disjunctions that exist among the different market systems (and corresponding consumer orientations) that are situated within the global circuits of corporate capitalism. In this spirit, we contend that the corporate co-optation of a counterculture can generate countervailing markets. These markets are countervailing in the specific sense that they amplify, implement, and actively promote the countercultural principles, meanings, and ideals which have been attenuated by corporate co-optation. In contradistinction to classic co-optation theory, our formulation holds that countercultural identifications are fundamentally dependent upon the marketplace systems through which their defining values and ideals are materially represented. In responding to corporate co-optation, agents with vested interests in preserving and commercially cultivating these reclaimed countercultural meanings play a pivotal role in building a countervailing market by recruiting consumers to the (commercial) cause through a variety of entrepreneurial and potentially indoctrinating activities.

The key agents in this countervailing market system are food and farm activists who promote the CSA model through seminars and literature, CSA farmers, and more devoted consumer members who act as evangelists for their CSA farms and the CSA model in general.

Through participation in this alternative system of exchange relationships, the actions and perceptions of CSA farmers and consumers become ideologically aligned through ideals of rooted communities, morally and socially redemptive artisanship, and the refutation of commodity fetishism: the latter of which maps onto the nostalgically tinged meta-goal of protecting a sacrosanct social institution (the small independent farm) from economic extinction.

Critics who contend that the countercultural values are merely a hip guise for bourgeois consumerism would likely conclude that CSA consumers are paying a premium to gain a vaunted status distinction over the latte sipping, Whole Foods aesthetes or the cost-conscious shoppers who will stock up on organic foods at Wal-Mart superstores. Status-seeking may well indeed play a role in some consumers’ affinity for CSA. However, this explanation is insufficient because it ignores the ways in which this countervailing market provides an experientially compelling ideological alternative to the disembedded consumption communities engendered by the institutional structures of global corporate capitalism (Sassen 2005; Tomlinson 1999). This alternative ideological frame, and its corresponding mode of communal consumption experiences, enables CSA consumers to perceive the unconventional demands and transaction costs imposed by this countervailing market system as socially redeeming benefits.

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The Influence of Delivery Mode on Consumer Choice of University
Pauline Hagel, Deakin University, Australia
Robin Shaw, Deakin University, Australia

ABSTRACT
This paper reports on an empirical investigation into the importance of study mode in the choice of university by Australian student-consumers, using conjoint methods. Traditional approaches to investigating student choice have overlooked study mode because they assume a norm of face-to-face attendance on-campus. Three segments were identified based on the relative importance which students placed on the university, study mode and tuition fees in making their choice, and the segments were distinguishable on some demographic and situational variables. The findings have relevance to universities across national and reputational markets in making their decisions about how to deliver educational products.

INTRODUCTION
Understanding the importance to student-consumers of how educational products are delivered is of relevance to universities as they plan to meet the demands of dynamic political, technological, and market environments. The delivery or “study mode” refers to the means by which educational programs are delivered to students, and is distinct from both “attendance mode” or “attendance type”. In Australia, attendance mode may be internal, external or multimodal, while attendance type may be part-time or full-time. Increasingly, differences exist in the way students are enrolled and the actual study modes they experience. For example, students may face a blend of options or hybrid study modes such as web-supplemented, web-dependent or wholly online. Many universities are developing online learning as either an ancillary or a stand-alone mode of delivery (see, for example, Allen and Seaman 2006). Simultaneously, part-time students and full-time students with supplementary employment are assumed to welcome the flexibility such a delivery mode brings. However, much of this development of flexible delivery is supply and technology driven, and neglected by researchers into student university choice. Consequently, the purpose of this paper is to report the findings of an empirical study that investigated the importance of study mode to students in the context of their university choice decision.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Studies of the criteria that traditional students use in choosing between universities have been prevalent in the US literature for several decades due to declining demand for college education and to the decentralised and heterogeneous nature of the market for higher education (see, Jackson 1982). However, in countries such as Australia and the UK, investigation of the criteria which students use in selecting a university is relatively recent and is occurring in response to increasing inter-university competition and rising levels of tuition fees.

In examining the important criteria in choice, the focus is on one stage of the university choice process—that of evaluation between institutions (see, Jackson 1982). Reportedly, this evaluation tends to come towards the end of the university choice process when, generally, students have narrowed down their choice set to several institutions to which they can reasonably expect to gain entry (see, Moogan et al. 1999). Models of university choice assume that students are largely rational; they make a profit-maximising choice in seeking investment and consumption benefits from their higher education. Further, students are assumed to conceive of their choices as “bundles of attributes” and have preferences for the attributes rather than products as a whole. In evaluating these options, students are thought to attend to a few specific characteristics of universities (see, Jackson 1982).

Notwithstanding some differences, a similar set of characteristics has been identified as important to university choice in the US, UK and Australia. In summary, these have included academic reputation, course availability, location, tuition fees and amenities. However, a question arises about the completeness and continued relevance of this set of characteristics. Pascarella and Terenzini (1998), for example, noted that studies of university choice in the US have been dominated by the choice made by traditional participants in higher education and by those who aspire to the research or liberal arts universities. Consequently, conventional studies of university choice have featured two main assumptions, usually implicitly: the first about what constitutes a university and who its students are, and the second, about the normal means of attendance, that is, full-time and face-to-face study.

School leavers no longer dominate higher education markets in many developed nations (Levine 2001). In Australia, as elsewhere, the undergraduate university population has diversified to include many non-traditional students and international fee-paying students. Further, even traditional school leavers engage increasingly concurrently in work and study, and students faced with the rising cost of higher education are growing more pragmatic, instrumental and consumerist in their educational choices.

Accompanying these changes in the student population are changing conditions of supply. With the growth in student numbers and declining government financial support, universities in Australia and elsewhere have had to find means of providing education that are more efficient and that meet the needs of their, increasingly, self-funding students. Simultaneously, alternative forms of delivery have emerged, often facilitated by information and communications technology (ICT). These have provided universities with more options in the way they can deliver education programs. Many universities have adopted ICT-based forms of delivery in the belief that these will be more cost effective, cater for diversity, reach new markets, signal the innovativeness of the university, and promote its competitiveness in globalising markets (see, Cloonan 2004). However, there has been little examination of the importance of study mode in university choice.

Preferences for alternative forms of delivery or study mode have been investigated in relation to non-school leavers including distance education or part-time students (see, Robyler 2000). However, rather than examine their university choice, these studies investigated why students attended by non-traditional means or enrolled in non-traditional institutions. Some studies have investigated the importance of flexible delivery or distance modes to student choice (see, James et al. 1999). However, the enquiry about study modes has been one-way: “How important are flexible modes in your choice of course or university?” No studies were found that asked traditional students about the importance they placed on being able to study on-campus, face-to-face when choosing a university course. This question is of equal importance to that of flexibility. While universities promote flexibility and pursue efficiency, this may be at the cost of the on-campus experience for some students. What are the study mode preferences of international students who pay full fees and come to a particular country for the experience itself? How do students, in general, perceive and value...
different types of delivery modes? Despite the vast literature on, in particular, distance and online learning, little is known about students’ relative preferences for different study modes, and how students might trade-off study mode against other choice criteria.

Models of university choice assume that students make trade-offs between the attributes of universities in making their final selections (see, Jackson 1982). This process may be conscious and/or unconscious. However, there have been very few studies that have investigated the actual trade-offs which students make between attributes. A popular method for examining trade-offs in decision-making is conjoint analysis which enables preference to be decomposed into its constituent parts. Three published studies have reported findings for undergraduate university choice using this method (Hooley and Lynch 1981; Soutar and Turner 2002; Moogan et al. 2001). The findings of all three studies about the relative importance of the course, academic reputation and location were generally consistent with the literature. However, none of these studies examining students’ trade-offs between criteria, included fees and costs. This was understandable given the context of the studies. These were conducted in the UK and Australia at a time when university fees were a minor consideration for most domestic undergraduate students. Further, none of these studies included study mode as a criterion in choice. Those studies that have included some reference to study mode have focused on alternatives to face-to-face modes, that is, forms of flexible or distance education. Finally, most previous studies of university choice have examined the choices of relatively homogeneous groups of students.

Consequently, two questions are addressed in this paper:

1. What trade-offs do consumers make between course at university, tuition fees and study mode in making their university choice?
2. What segments exist based on the importance placed on these attributes in university choice?

METHOD

A traditional, or “main effects” conjoint analysis was used, which assumes a compensatory choice strategy whereby poor performance on one attribute (e.g., price) can be compensated for by good performance on another (e.g., reputation). A respondent’s overall rating of an option is assumed to be a summation of the individual utilities for each attribute. It was considered a suitable method for exploring university choice for several reasons: firstly, prospective students are thought to evaluate systematically only a small set of alternatives (Dawes and Brown 2004); secondly, students have been found to use compensatory methods to evaluate their final choice set (see, Moogan et al. 1999); and, thirdly, the method does not rely on respondents being able to articulate the value they place on different criteria. Further, conjoint analysis is a useful method for understanding how people behave as competitive conditions change (Huber 1997).

Three attributes were selected for inclusion: “university”, “study mode” and “tuition fee” (see Table 1). The number of attributes was restricted to three to keep the conjoint task simple for respondents. Both positive and negative attributes were included as recommended by Hair et al. (1998). The attributes and levels for the conjoint were determined after an analysis of the Bachelor of Commerce (BCom) degree market in Australia and the conduct of a focus group of BCom students. The three attributes were judged to be distinct conceptually, communicable and actionable (see, Hair et al. 1998).

The first attribute, university, incorporates elements of reputation or prestige, geographic location and amenities. The university attribute was operationalised as four universities that characterise the reputational diversity of the higher education system in Australia (Marginson and Considine 2000), situated in one Australian State, to ensure that the universities provided a realistic choice set for prospective students wishing to study on-campus. The second attribute, study mode, represents the functional quality of the service, which is a critical aspect of what students purchase. Study modes influence the convenience, flexibility and interpersonal interaction that students experience, and each provides different combinations of these benefits.

The levels of study mode were chosen to reflect a range of feasible practices. Official enrolment in Australian higher education can be either on-campus, face-to-face, or alternatively, off-campus, by external or distance modes. In Australia, and countries with a similar history of distance education, there are two main types of distance education: paper-based mail delivery and web-based, online delivery. The three terms used to describe study modes in this study have precedence in the literature, and the term “web-based” is used to define a study mode that is online (see, for example, Sweeney and Ingram 2001).

The third attribute, tuition fee, represented the monetary price of the product. Price is usually included in conjoint studies because it represents a “distinct component of value” (Hair et al. 1998, 407). The price levels chosen were realistic in reflecting both the low and high ends of prices for a BCom, and the highest and lowest were set just outside existing values as suggested by Hair et al. (1998).

The inclusion of three attributes (two attributes with four levels and one with three levels) meant that 48 different course profiles were possible. To limit the number of profiles rated by respondents, a fractional factorial design was used, resulting in 20 profiles, including four holdout profiles used for validation purposes (see, Hair et al. 1998). No problems of unrealistic combinations of profiles were found. The full-profile method of presentation was used, and respondents rated the profiles on a 10-point scale according to how likely they were to choose a particular BCom. Students were asked to assume that they fulfilled the entry requirements for each university and that the courses were similar on other variables such as the number and range of units and entry requirements. In addition to the conjoint experiment, students were asked to rate the importance of 30 possible variables in course choice. In addition, respondents were asked for their demographic and situational details. Pilot testing of the questionnaire ensured that the instrument was appropriate.

Sampling Procedure

To simplify the design of the conjoint experiment, it was assumed that students had already made their choice of course. Consequently, students were included in the survey who were enrolled in a BCom at one Australian university, and who were enrolled in their course either on-campus or off-campus. Further, this university had a long tradition of distance education and dual mode delivery. The latter meant that even school leavers enrolled on-campus, had some experience of using distance learning materials. Therefore, those surveyed were in a position to distinguish between different studies modes.

Questionnaire Administration and Response Details

The questionnaires were mailed to students with a covering letter. Students were free to respond anonymously if they wished. No follow-up of non-respondents was undertaken. Five hundred and fifty-five usable questionnaires were returned. This represented a response rate of 30% after allowing for non-deliverables. Three cases with substantial missing data were removed leaving
552. The demographic profile of respondents matched those of students enrolled in the BCom at the university with the exception that proportionately more females responded to the questionnaire. Of the 552 respondents, 71% were enrolled on-campus; 42% were males; 68% were enrolled full-time; 26% were in the first year of their course, 40% were second years and 34% were third (final) years; and 49% of on-campus students were full-fee paying Asian students, largely from South-East Asia. The remaining were Australian (domestic) students.

General data coding, screening and missing data analyses were conducted as per the recommendations of Tabachnick and Fidell (2001). The hypothetical institutional profiles were analysed using the conjoint procedure in SPSS. Post hoc segmentation was performed using both hierarchical and non-hierarchical cluster analysis.

FINDINGS
Model estimation and goodness of fit were examined. Respondents with low correlations on the estimation model and/or low correlations on holdouts (“low” being defined as below .60) were removed from the sample, leaving 403 respondents.

The results shown in Figure 1 indicate that all three attributes were important in choice. The most important attribute was study mode which had an importance of 41%. The second most important attribute was tuition fees with 32%. While still important in choice, the least important attribute was University at 27%.

Segmentation analysis of the data was conducted a priori and post hoc. For the a priori segmentation, the analysis was conducted by mode of attendance (on or off-campus enrolment) and by resident status (domestic or international). As international students were not able to enrol off-campus, the segmentation by

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<th>Study Mode</th>
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<td>Off-campus– print-based</td>
<td>10,000</td>
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<td>University C</td>
<td>Off-campus– web-based</td>
<td>15,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>University D</td>
<td></td>
<td>20,000</td>
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# Real university names were used in the actual study and a location was specified for each university to distinguish between its different campuses.
enrolment mode is restricted to domestic students, and that by resident status is restricted to on-campus enrolled students, only. For mode of attendance segmentation, study mode remained the most important attribute. However, the hierarchy of importance changed with “university” rated the second most important attribute for on-campus students ahead of tuition fees. The difference in the importance of the university attribute was significant (p<.001). There were differences also in part-worths for study modes and universities. Those for study mode were in the expected direction with on-campus students having a significantly higher mean for face-to-face study compared to off-campus enrolled students, and significantly lower means for web-based and print-based study. As indicated, there were also significant differences between attendance groups in the part-worths for universities. There was no difference in the part-worths for tuition fees between the two segments.

The second segmentation was conducted by resident status. While study mode remained the most important attribute for international students, it was equal to importance with tuition fees. Study mode was significantly less important to international students (p<.001), and tuition fees (p<.01) were significantly more important. There was no significant difference between the two groups on the importance of university. The difference in the importance of tuition fees is consistent with the significant difference in the part-worth for tuition fees. In contrast to the first segmentation, there were fewer differences in the part-worths for study modes and universities between the segments on resident status. However, the two segments did differ significantly in their utility for Universities B and C (both p<.01).

In summary, for the a priori segments, both attendance mode and resident status were useful ways of segmenting the data in that they revealed differences in the importance of particular study modes and universities to on versus off-campus students, and differences in the importance of tuition fees to domestic versus international students. In both segmentations, study mode remained the top-rated attribute although for international students, the tuition fee attribute was equally important.

The post hoc segmentation was conducted in four steps: (1) an initial hierarchical cluster analysis on importance scores; (2) cross-validation using a non-hierarchical cluster analysis; (3) examination of the predictive accuracy of the cluster solutions using discriminant analysis; and (4) profiling of the clusters on demographic variables. To perform the initial hierarchical cluster, the data were divided randomly into two subsets as recommended by Everitt, Landau and Leese (2001). The first subset (n=202) was analysed through SPSS using the Ward method and squared Euclidean Distance. Inspection of the agglomeration coefficients suggested that a three-cluster solution represented the best solution. All three clusters were of practical consequence ranging from 30% to 40% of the sub-sample. Each cluster was distinct on one of the importance scores. Members of Cluster 1 placed their highest importance on university (46.5%), although study mode was also important (32.9%). Cluster 2 members placed their highest importance on tuition fee (56.2%), and for Cluster 3 members, study mode was their most important attribute (60.9%).

A three-cluster solution from the non-hierarchical analysis was obtained by analysing the second subset of students (n=201) using the K-means method. The cluster centroids created through the hierarchical cluster were used as seeds for the K-means clusters. The non-hierarchical clustering produced clusters of similar size. Each cluster had a very similar profile on the three importance scores to one of the hierarchical clusters.

Both cluster solutions were subject to a discriminant analysis to assess their predictive accuracy. (The details of these analyses are not reported in this paper.) The analysis of both solutions performed creditably in predicting group membership using the criterion suggested by Hair et al. (1998). However, as the discriminant function for the K-means solution did a better job of predicting membership of all three clusters, this solution was chosen for the purposes of profiling the three clusters. The K-means clusters were profiled on various demographic and other variables. Chi-square tests showed significant differences between clusters on five variables: mode of attendance, type of work (whether in paid work), resident status, and fee-paying status. Other variables such as age, gender and parental status were not significant.

Cluster 1 (high importance of university) included respondents who were proportionately more likely than those in Cluster 2 to attend on-campus, work for pay, be domestic students, have no dependants, and be in the younger age group, that is, 25 years or less. Despite the findings of the a priori analysis that international students were more price sensitive, 39% of international students were grouped also in this cluster. Cluster 2 (high importance of tuition fees) was distinguished from the other groups in that respondents were proportionately more likely not to be in paid work and to be international students. Nineteen per cent of off-campus respondents were also in this cluster. In addition, more members of this cluster reported having dependants. Cluster 3 (high importance of study mode) appeared to be the most distinctive group. Compared to Clusters 1 and 2, Cluster 3 respondents were proportionately more likely to be enrolled off-campus, attend part-time, work for pay, be domestic students, and pay domestic full-fees or make HECS payments in advance. Clusters 2 and 3 differed substantially on four variables: mode of enrolment, attendance mode, work for pay and residential status. However, similar proportions in both clusters had dependants and were in the two older age groups.

**DISCUSSION**

The first research question asked about the trade-offs respondents make between attributes in their institutional choice. In this study, all three attributes were found to be important in choice. In descending order, the important variables were study mode, tuition fee and university.

The finding on the importance of study mode is a notable departure from the literature. Previous studies of university choice largely disregarded this attribute. Off-campus or flexible study modes were found to have some importance to non-school leavers wishing to enrol in a university course (Robyler 2000). However, no previous studies have investigated the importance of study mode, more generally, to traditional university students. The importance of study mode was driven mainly by the extent to which respondents perceived on-campus and off-campus modes as polar extremes. For non-school leavers, on-campus study may be an extreme option because of the situational constraints faced by them (in terms of distance, and work or family commitments). Conceivably, these constraints mean that such students simply cannot attend on-campus face-to-face and, therefore, cannot trade-off study mode for other attributes such as tuition fees and university. An additional explanation provided in the literature is that some students may prefer the independence and flexibility provided by off-campus study modes (see, Wallace 1996). However, while the importance of study mode to non-school leavers may be well understood, no comparable explanation for on-campus preference is provided in the literature. Why do on-campus students perceive on-campus and off-campus as extreme choices when they face no situational barriers that might prohibit them from studying by off-campus modes? This is a particularly interesting question given the moves to extend “opportunities” for traditional students to learn by means that are more independent and with the developments in online
The results of this study suggest that for many traditional undergraduates, being able to study face-to-face on-campus was more important to them than the university they would attend or the tuition fees they had to pay. A further finding on study modes was that respondents distinguished only marginally between web-based and print-based study. That is, in aggregate, web-based study did not increase the attractiveness of the off-campus mode to students who wanted to study on-campus, and slightly decreased its attractiveness for students wishing to study off-campus. This finding is contrary to the trends in higher education towards offering more ICT-intensive delivery.

The second most important attribute on average to students was tuition fee. In this study, the results suggest that respondents were only moderately price sensitive in choosing between institutions in which to study a business course. International students paying full fees were significantly more price sensitive than domestic students. This suggests that the level of tuition fees will increase in importance as a decision criterion for Australian students. The university attribute was only marginally less important than tuition fees and still contributed substantially to the overall institutional preference of students. Clearly, some caution is required in drawing conclusions about the relative importance of the three attributes due to both the design of the conjoint and sampling issues, such as interaction effects, the inclusion of actual brand names for universities, and the extremity of values used to describe each attribute. However, there was no obvious and consistent bias in the design and sampling decisions that would have combined to produce the specific results.

The second research question was concerned with the degree of homogeneity of the sample. This analysis revealed that domestic on-campus respondents placed more importance on the university attribute and less on study mode and tuition fee compared to off-campus students. However, the two mode groups were equally price sensitive despite the fact that more off-campus students were paying HECS fees in advance. These differences in the HECS payment system may have been offset by the greater likelihood of off-campus students being employed full-time.

International students as a group placed less importance on study mode and more on tuition fee, and they were significantly more price negative and distinguished more between universities than did domestic students. However, despite these differences between segments, the hierarchy of importance, regardless of segmentation, remained largely the same. Study mode was still the most important variable although it was equal in importance to tuition fees for international students. University remained the least important variable with the exception of domestic on-campus students for whom it was narrowly more important than fees. Further, more international students placed their highest importance on the university attribute. Previous studies have found that international students place more emphasis on reputation and less on amenities than Australian undergraduates (see, Gatfield et al. 1999).

However, the segments in the a priori analyses were not homogeneous. Sub-samples were identified in the data from the post hoc segmentations that cut across both enrolment modes and residential status. Three clusters were identified based on the importance placed on one of the attributes, and were of relatively similar size and identifiable on several situational characteristics. (The largest segment was divided subsequently into flexible and classroom learners.) The cluster analyses revealed considerable heterogeneity within the a priori segments. For example, not all international students were concerned equally about tuition fees in making their hypothetical institutional choices. While 41% of undergraduate international students were in Cluster 2 (high importance of tuition fee), almost an equal percentage were in the cluster whose members placed their highest importance on University. Similarly, membership of the post hoc clusters cut across enrolment.
mode with some off-campus respondents being in the “tuition fee cluster” and domestic on-campus respondents represented in all three clusters.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Shifts by universities towards alternative delivery of their academic programs, particularly through online methods, assume an understanding of the importance of study modes to students that is untested in the literature. The findings from the research were clear—study mode was the most important attribute in choice, assuming students had chosen their course of study. Tuition fees were second in importance, followed by university. All three attributes were of considerable importance. Undergraduates preferred face-to-face study and had a marginal preference for print-based study over web-based study. They were relatively insensitive to tuition increases. They distinguished only marginally between three of the four universities.

The results for the a priori analyses were consistent with those found for the aggregated data, that is, study mode was the most important attribute in choice regardless of the basis of segmenta-

The Influence of Delivery Mode on Consumer Choice of University

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The UK record industry are aware of what music consumers purchase, the way in which consumers purchase (online, music stores) and artist popularity but this does not facilitate an understanding of how or why music is consumed and what insight this might generate for future demand. As consuming is always a complex social phenomenon, especially with regard to adolescents (Benn, 2004), understanding music use and consumption and the impact this period of ‘storm and stress’ has on the ability of organisations to target and communicate effectively with adolescents will be of use to the music industry.

Attracting a target audience has encouraged the UK’s record companies to increase spend on advertising to £128 million in 2004, representing 10.5 per cent of the £1.2 billion industry revenue in the same year. Targeting consumers effectively becomes increasingly important as the pressure to achieve a return on investment becomes more critical in an increasingly competitive environment (BPI, 2005). Age, gender and class are the main criteria for presenting statistics and survey findings across a range of market and consumer data produced by BPI, Mintel, Keynote, IFPI and Euromonitor (2005). However the only data provided by the main statistical reporting organisations that distinguishes between early adolescent age groups (12-14 years) and older adolescents (15-19) is ‘choice of music’, ‘music downloading’, ‘purchasing by outlet’ and ‘music attitude statements’ (Mintel only). All other adolescent consumer data is collapsed into the broader age classification of 12-19 years. This clearly produces a composite and only partial view of the adolescent consumer of popular music and represents a weakness in the industry’s understanding and knowledge of their younger consumers.

This research involved 24 longitudinal in-depth interviews with adolescents to gauge the way in which they chose, used and consumed music relative to their expression of identity and their family environment. That is, twelve adolescents were interviewed and then the same adolescents re-interviewed six months to a year later. Whilst it is possible to consider different age groups of adolescents and provide a ‘longitudinal’ view where variables are consistent (using gender, socio-economic group, level of education, race), the accuracy of this approach is not as reliable as ‘following’ individuals through time. This is particularly true where individuals experience different situations over a period of time (illness, parental divorce, exams, change of friendship groups etc.). It is only by asking the same individual to consider their experiences over time (and in this case how it influenced music choice, use and consumption and subsequent expression of identity) that a true reflection of an adolescent’s ‘journey’ can be proffered.

The sampling was purposive where respondents were hand-picked on the basis of their typicality (age, gender and family type). Harvey and Byrd (1998) indicate that early adolescence (12-14 years) is mostly about acquiring information and experience, whilst late adolescence (15-18) is characterised as being a period of identity development in which the information obtained earlier is used to build and consolidate a new identity. The longitudinal interviews also allowed differences between age groups to be identified. These interviews were conducted to understand adolescent music consumption and to explore how this may be influenced by different family and social (peer) environments.

The interview was designed in three phases. Initially, pictures were taken by the adolescents before they arrived so they could be introduced and discussed at the start of the interview. Secondly the interview utilised the ‘draw and write’ (projective) technique, designed to encourage the adolescents to express what music meant to them. Finally when the interviews were finished, the respondents & interviewer were asked to complete a blank card with their thoughts on the interview. In this way, a record was maintained of the interviewer-interviewee perception of what had been discussed and this was taken into account when interpreting the data.

The findings suggest that understanding teenagers’ use and choice of music may allow a more meaningful segmentation of the adolescent consumer. For the record industry, simply recording the family type of the adolescent in market research studies may be one indicator of greater consumption of associated music products (branded goods, concert tickets and clothing). Greater knowledge and understanding of this diverse group of consumers has also illustrated ‘situational consumption’.

Adolescent music consumers are profiled with three suggested ‘segments’ (Chameleons, Experiential and Defender). ‘Chameleons’ (who readily ‘blend in’) are more inclined to listen to music they personally prefer privately whereas ‘Experiential’ music consumers have an eclectic, diverse music taste. ‘Defenders’ are committed to particular artists and are more inclined to illustrate this through consumption and self expression. Marketers and researchers will be interested in the ways in which music consumption appears to be contradictory for adolescents raised in a particular type of family. This research provides in insight as to why this might be the case (bonding, building bridges and conflict avoidance). Marketers and the music industry need to ensure communication approaches reflect this consumption behaviour.

It would also seem plausible that given the eclecticism of the intact adolescents in this sample, the likely innovators and early adopters of new and modified music will be raised in an intact family environment. As the parents of intact adolescents also appear to be more encouraging and supportive of ‘trying on new behaviours’, they too may be targeted as a ‘connector(s)’ to reinforce promotional campaigns or diverse music consumption.

References
Going for a Song: A New Understanding of Adolescent Music Consumption


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Identity is an ironic concept in the heart of consumer research. Although endowed with the art of unfolding the mysteries of identities and myriad of meanings, consumer research, itself, needs to be identified as a ‘distinct academic discipline’ in the area of social sciences (Belk 1986; Simonson et al. 2001). One of the main causes of such a distinction deferral is rooted in consumer research’s predominant focus on developed and Western contexts and neglecting less developed and non-Western countries (Arnould and Thompson 2005). This, however, is related to the fact that consumerism, as a prevailing feature of modern societies (Zukin 1981) originated from Western and developed con-texts (Silverstone 2004) originated from Western and developed con-texts (Silverstone 1981). Therefore, the most fundamental step for consumer research to be differentiated as a distinct academic discipline is conducting ‘global consumer research’ (Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Steenkamp and Thompson 2005; Steenkamp and Burgess 2002). Drawing upon prior work (Kjeldgaard and Askegaard 2006; Appadurai 1990; Ger and Belk 1996; Sandikci and Ger 2002) this study is an attempt to take another step toward the realisation of this dream.

This study has used Iran as a developing non-Western context for further investigation into consumer behaviour. With a particular focus on cultural consumption, the paper examines the impact of cultural globalisation on the interrelatedness of identity constituting meanings and consumption practices of young Iranians. Iran, however, offers a highly interesting context to study the issues of consumer identity within the conceptual framework of cultural globalisation. With the significance of the 1979 Islamic Revolution as a turning point (transition of power from a secular monarchy to a theocratic state), the contemporary history of Iran is shaped by ideological, political, cultural, and religious contradictory juxtapositions. This complexity gets even more intensified as the country has confronted a contested globalisation (Mohammadi 2003) that has affected the lifestyles, identities, and consumption practices of young Iranians who comprise more than 70 percent of the country’s 70-million population.

Having employed a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967), the study proposes a theoretical framework to study the issues of consumer identity and culture in the context of cultural globalisation. The analysis of qualitative data (collected through in depth interviews, focus groups and participant observation) has led to the development of a substantive theory in the Iranian context. Based on this theory, cultural globalisation is conceptualised as an ‘intercultural learning process’ (Fox 2003) in which consumers are exposed to a plethora of meanings, lifestyles, and identities (Featherstone 2004; Nijman 1999; Waters 1995; Friedman 1994) of other cultures. These elements are disseminated through different dimensions (consumptionscape, ethnoscape, technoscapes, finanscape, mediascape, ideoscape) (Appadurai 1990; Ger and Belk 1996; Nijman 1999) of cultural globalisation. Whilst these elements represent the visible part of other cultures (Allan 2003), consumers reflexively (Giddens 1991) select their own ‘desired’ (Belk et al 2003) meanings and consumption patterns. Based on their subject position—as consumers with unstable and playful identities (Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Firat et al 1995; Firat and Shultz 1997), individuals happen to be either ‘receptive’ or ‘resis-tive’ toward other cultures (Russell et al 2004; Sandikci and Ger 2002). In confrontation with other cultures, therefore, individual consumers ‘learn’ (Fox 2003) about both other cultures and their own cultures. This leads to drawing comparison between ‘self’ and ‘other’ (Hall 1981). Consequently, they question the foundations of their ‘taken-for-granted’ identities (Giddens 1991) and move on toward adopting a series of ‘multiple’ and ‘novel’ (Featherstone 2004; Tomlinson 1999; Giddens 1990, 2005) ‘modes of being’ (Firat and Venkatesh 1995). The nature and essence of these identities, however, depend on the degree of consumers’ ‘cultural identity salience’ (Russell 2004) which affects their openness to other cultures. With regard to the diversity of globally available marketplace resources (which are becoming more similar world-wide) as the means of reflecting or constructing these identities (Arnould and Thompson 2005), individuals are in constant process of ‘deconstructing’ and ‘reconstructing’ (Sandikci and Ger 2002) meanings and identities to select a ‘multitude of styles’ (Thompson and Haytko 1997). Therefore, even the homogenisation of such marketplace resources cannot result in the rise of a homogenous (consumer) culture (Smith 1990; Giddens 1990; Shani 2003). What is global about consumer culture is the fact that consumers around the world use consumption as a source of identity reflection and creation (Nijman 1999).

The findings of the study, therefore, can serve the theoretical body of consumer research by proposing an alternative approach to study the issues of consumer identity projects in the context of cultural globalisation. From this perspective, cultural globalisation is perceived as an ‘intellectual-institutional process’ (Venturino 2000) rather than a phenomenon. Thus, a deeper understanding of consumers’ identity projects, consumption practices, and lifestyles in both developed and developing contexts requires consumer researchers to keep an eye on the possible impacts of cultural globalisation on the contexts of their studies. In the conditions of globalisation, where no single context is immune against the consequences of cultural globalisation, consumption cannot be studied in secluded contexts of purely local and farfetched villages.

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