Preface

The second Latin American Conference of the Association for Consumer Research (ACR) was held at the Renaissance Hotel in São Paulo, Brazil from July 31st to August 3rd, 2008. This volume contains the various works presented at the conference.

The second Latin American ACR (LA-ACR) helps our association in the quest to become more truly global. In that vein, the conference was a major success—interactions between researchers from all over the world were a major highlight. Scholars from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and North America all participated in the conference. Of the over 100 attendees, about 43% were from Latin American universities, 22% were from the United States, and 35% were from the rest of the world:

- Africa—2
- Asia/Australia—7
- Brazil—36
- Canada—7
- Europe—21
- Latin America—7
- Mexico—3
- USA—23

We had over 100 paper submissions for this conference, but wanted to ensure that we maintained the standards of quality for which ACR is known. Thus, approximately 40% of the competitive paper submissions were accepted for presentation and subsequent publication in this volume. The selection process was accomplished thanks to our program committee and other dedicated scholars who served as reviewers—thanks to all. Russ Belk and Rob Kozinets co-chaired the Film Festival, and we would like to thank them for everything they did to make the festival a success. Terry Pavia and Marlys Mason co-chaired the Transformative Consumer Research Pre-Conference, which was a huge success, and they are owed many thanks for all of their efforts. In addition, three methodological workshops were held, and we’d like to thank the workshop leaders: Russ Belk, Victoria Jones, and John Rossiter.

We also had several sponsors, including Sphinx Brasil, the Uninove Marketing Department, the Uninove Programa de Pós-Graduação em Administração, the UTSA College of Business (COB) Business Studies for the Americas, the UTSA COB Information Technology Group, and the UTSA COB Office of the Dean. Many thanks to all of them for helping make the conference a huge success, both from a scholarly and social perspective. The non-academic highlight was the Saturday night dinner and entertainment at Fogo de Chão, complete with delicious Brazilian food and traditional Brazilian music and dance—all who attended had a wonderful time!

Finally, we will be eternally grateful to Rajiv Vaidyanathan, without whose patient guidance throughout the entire planning process, the conference simply would not have come together as well as it did. Thanks Rajiv!

And thanks to all of you who presented your work, attended the conference, and had a wonderful series of interactions with scholars from around the world—you are all a part of helping ACR to become a more global association.

Sincerely,

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Table of Contents and Conference Program

2008 LATIN AMERICA
ASSOCIATION FOR CONSUMER RESEARCH
CONFERENCE

July 31- August 3
Renaissance São Paulo Hotel
São Paulo, Brazil

Preface ............................................................................................................................................................................. iii

ACR Conference Committee and Reviewers ................................................................................................................. iv

ACR Conference Session Listing .................................................................................................................................... vi

Table of Contents ............................................................................................................................................................. ix

Author Index .................................................................................................................................................................. 254

July 31, 2008
PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOP ON TRANSFORMATIVE CONSUMER RESEARCH
9:00 am-5:30 pm

Welcome Remarks and Introductions
Workshop Overview and Goals

9:30-10:45 Renegade Consumers: When the Buyer Doesn’t Fit Market Expectations
11:00–12:15 The Role of Debt in Contemporary Consumer Society
1:45-3:00 Consumers as Active Stakeholders in the Market
3:15-4:30 Consumer Health Impacted By the Market
4:40-5:30 Round Table Close

August 01, 2008
SESSION 1
9:00 am-10:30 am

1.01 Branding in a Changing World
1.02 Psycholinguistic Effects on Brand and Brand Name Evaluation
1.03 Online Reviews, Internet Auctions, and Embodied Agents: New Findings on Electronic Commerce

August 01, 2008
SESSION 2
11:00 am-12:30 pm

2.01 Recent Discoveries about Brand Extensions
2.02 WORKSHOP: When to Use Multiple-Item Versus Single-Item Measures
2.03 Culture and Consumption: More About a Globalized World
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 01, 2008</td>
<td>Session 3</td>
<td>2:00 pm-3:30 pm</td>
<td>3.01 Emotions and Behaviors: Implications for Public Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.02 WORKSHOP: Managing Research Collaborations with Brazilian Academics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.03 Fashion: Consumption, Involvement, and Segmentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 01, 2008</td>
<td>Session 4</td>
<td>4:00 pm-5:30 pm</td>
<td>4.01 TV and Print Advertising: Affect and Perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.03 Consumer Behavior in Retail Settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 01, 2008</td>
<td>Working Paper Session</td>
<td>6:30 pm-8:30 pm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 02, 2008</td>
<td>Session 5</td>
<td>9:00 am-10:30 am</td>
<td>5.01 Predicting Models to Explain Income, Demand, and Preferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.02 Decision Making and Judgment Processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 02, 2008</td>
<td>Session 6</td>
<td>11:00 am-12:30 pm</td>
<td>6.01 The Self and its Influence on Behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 02, 2008</td>
<td>Film Festival</td>
<td>9:00 am-12:30 pm</td>
<td>7.01 Country-of-Origin Effects, Foreign Goods, and Boycotts: Consumption in a Globalized World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.02 Innovation and Loyalty: Empirical Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 02, 2008</td>
<td>Session 7</td>
<td>2:00 pm-3:30 pm</td>
<td>8.01 Consumption among Working Class Families and Counterfeit Purchase Behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8.02 Grocery Shopping, Middle-Aged Women, and Cause-Related Marketing: Empirical Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 03, 2008</td>
<td>Session 9</td>
<td>9:00 am-12:00 am</td>
<td>9.01 VIDEOGRAPHY WORKSHOP: Consumer Videography in the Real World</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Table of Contents

## Pre-Conference Workshop

### WORKSHOP SUMMARY

*How Can Consumer Researchers Increase Well-Being?*

*The Workshop on Transformative Consumer Behavior* ................................................................. 1

  Teresa M. Pavia, University of Utah

---

*The Rebel Co-Creator: Exploring the iPhone Unlocking Phenomenon* ........................................ 2

  Nikhilesh Dholakia, University of Rhode Island, USA
  Joonas Rokka, Helsinki School of Economics, Finland
  Caroline Wilcox, University of Rhode Island, USA
  Julianne Joy Cabusas, University of Rhode Island, USA
  Emílio J. M. Arruda-Filho, Amazon Studies Institute, Pará, Brazil

---

*Virtual Piracy or Resistance? An Investigation of the Brazilian Digital Music Consumer* ............... 2

  Denise Franca Barros, EBAPE/FGV-RJ, Brazil
  João Felipe Rammelt Sauerbronn, EGN/Unigranrio, Brazil
  Leonardo Vasconcelos Cavalier Darbilly, EBAPE/FGV-RJ, Brazil
  Alessandra Mello, EBAPE/FGV-RJ, Brazil

---

*Embodiment and the Marketplace* ........................................................................................................... 3

  Marlys Mason, Oklahoma State University, USA
  Teresa Pavia, University of Utah, USA

---

*What Basis for Consumer Rights? The Case of Credit Card Debt* .................................................. 3

  Paul Henry, University of Sydney, Australia
  Michael Paton, University of Sydney, Australia

---

*An Empirical Investigation of Consumer Credit Satisfaction and Loyalty in a Large Brazilian Supermarket Chain* .................................................................................................................................................................. 4

  Eric Cohen, Ibmec Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

---

*The Redefining of Debt: Vulnerable Consumers and the Acceptance of Debt in Australia* ............... 4

  Linda Brennan, Victoria University, Australia
  Wayne Binney, Victoria University, Australia

---

*How Understanding Drivers of the Joy of Giving Can Help Nonprofits Increase Donations* ............ 5

  Michal Strahilevitz, Golden Gate University, USA

---

*The Relative Value of Environmental Certification and Engagement* ................................................. 5

  André Carlos Martins Menck, Universidade Federal de Uberlândia, Brazil
  João Bento de Oliveira Filho, Universidade Federal de Uberlândia, Brazil

---

*The Organic Farmers’ Markets and the New Forms of Community: An Analysis of the Established Social Links at Periodic Spaces of Food Commercialization* ................................................................. 5

  Gustavo Cascardi, Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil
  Eugenio Ávila Pedrozo, Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil
  Tania Nunes da Silva, Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil

---

*Cigarette Product Descriptors Offering Potential Reassurance to Health Concerned Consumers* ............ 6

  Timothy Dewhirst, University of Guelph, Canada

---

*Preventing Youth Obesity: Effective Means of Promotion* ............................................................. 6

  Sabine Boesen-Mariani, University of Grenoble, France
  Carolina Werle, GEM and CERAG, France
  Marie-Laure Gavard-Perret, University of Grenoble, France
  Cyrielle Vellera, University of Grenoble, France
Teens and Anti-Tobacco Messages: Examining Reactance in Trial Users ................................................................. 7
James D. Mason, Oklahoma State University, USA
Marlys J. Mason, Oklahoma State University, USA

Symposia Summary

SYMPOSIA SUMMARY

Psycholinguistic Effects on Brand and Brand Name Evaluation .................................................................................. 8
L. J. Shrum, University of Texas at San Antonio, USA

Harmony’s Affective Impact on Brand Evaluations
Jennifer J. Argo, University of Alberta
Monica Popa, University of Alberta
Malcolm C. Smith, University of Manitoba

Effects of Articulatory Suppression on Phonetic Symbolism Effects on Brand Name Preference
L. J. Shrum, University of Texas at San Antonio
Tina M. Lowrey, University of Texas at San Antonio

Competitive Papers

FULL PAPERS

Product Relationships, Brand Meanings, and Symbolism for Mainstream Brands: the Case of the Sports Bike Community ...................................................................................................................... 10
Reto Felix, University of Monterrey, Mexico

Global or Local? Consumers’ Perception of Global Brands in Latin America ........................................................................... 16
Maria Merino, ITAM Mexico
Silvia Gonzalez, ITESM Mexico

Embodied Agents on a Communication and Branding Website: Modeling Effects Through an Affective Persuasion Route ........................................................................................................... 22
David Midgley, INSEAD, France
Pablo Lambert de Diesbach, Rouen School of Management, France

Effect of Brand Extension on Brand Image: A Study in the Brazilian Context ............................................................................. 30
Priscila Serrao, EBAPE-FGV, Brazil
Delane Botelho, EBAPE-FGV, Brazil

Understanding Consumer Culture: The Role of “Food” as an Important Cultural Category .............................................................. 36
Marcelo Jacques Fonseca, Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos–UNISINOS, Brasil

Men’s Fashion and the Consumption of Clothes .................................................................................................................. 42
Helene Bertrand, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Lia Davidovitsch, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Segmentation and Consumption of Luxury Fragrances: A Means-End Chain Analysis ................................................................. 48
Luciane Stefanes Alonso, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Paraná, Brazil
Renato Zancan Marchetti, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Paraná, Brazil

Testing A Theoretical Model of Fashion Clothing Involvement .................................................................................................. 55
Valter Vieira, PPGA/UnB, Brazil
Luiz Slongo, PPGA/EA/UFRGS, Brazil
Simultaneous Exposure to Television Programming and Advertising Content in an Interactive Context: Perceptual and Semantic Interference and Reinforcement ................................................................. 62
Verolien Cauberghe, University of Antwerp, Belgium
Patrick De Pelsmacker, University of Antwerp, Belgium
Wim Janssens, University of Antwerp, Belgium

Customer’s Evaluation of the Service Quality of the Appliance Sales Departments of Retail Stores in a South African Context ........................................................................................................ 69
Alida J. Gothan, University of Pretoria, Republic of South Africa
Alet C. Erasmus, University of Pretoria, Republic of South Africa

Exploring the Role of Retailer Image and Store Brands as Extrinsic Cues in Young Urban Consumers’ Choice of Interior Textile Products ............................................................................... 79
Nadine C. Sonnenberg, University of Pretoria, Republic of South Africa
Alet C. Erasmus, University of Pretoria, Republic of South Africa

A Consumer Income Predicting Model Based on Survey Data: An Analysis Using Geographically Weighted Regression (GWR) ..................................................................................................... 85
Eduardo Francisco, FGV-EAESP, Brazil
Peter Whigham, University of Otago, New Zealand
Francisco Aranha, FGV-EAESP, Brazil
Felipe Zambaldi, UMESP, Brazil
Mateus Ponchio, UNIMEP, Brazil

Negotiating Beauty: Local Readings of Global Cultural Flows ........................................................................................................... 92
Joonas Rokka, Helsinki School of Economics, Finland
Hanna-Kaisa Desavelle, Tampere University of Technology, Finland
Ilona Mikkonen, Helsinki School of Economics, Finland

Shame and Consumption: Examining the Link Between Men’s Consumption Assumptions and The Feeling of Shame ........................................................................................................ 98
João Felipe Rammelt Sauerbronn, EGN/Unigranrio, Brazil
Eduardo André Teixeira Ayrosa, EBAPE/FGV-RJ, Brazil
Denise Franca Barros, EBAPE/FGV-RJ, Brazil

The Decision Process of Products Under Continuous Innovation: Innovativeness, Consumer Goals and Perceived Innovation ........................................................................................................ 103
Eneida Ribeiro, Universidade Federal do Parana, Brazil
Paulo Henrique Prado, Universidade Federal do Parana, Brazil
Danielle Mantovani, Universidade Federal do Parana, Brazil
Flávio Souza, Universidade Federal do Parana, Brazil
Jose Carlos Korelo, Universidade Federal do Parana, Brazil

The Adoption of Innovations in High Technology Products by Young People: The Case of the Cellular Phone .................................................. 109
Paulo Henrique Muller Prado, Federal University of Parana, Brazil
Fábio Pimenta de Pádua Júnior, Federal University of Parana, Brazil
Danielle Mantovani Lucena da Silva, Federal University of Parana, Brazil
Flávio Freire Souza, Federal University of Parana, Brazil

Consumer Decision Making in a Counterfeit-Plentiful Market: an Exploratory Study in the Brazilian Context .............................................. 117
Marcia Christina Ferreira, EBAPE-FGV Brazil
Delane Botelho, EBAPE-FGV Brazil
Alda Rosana D. de Almeida, FEA-USP, Brazil

Why Qualitative Researchers Squint: A Micro Analysis of the Temporal Aspects for Grocery Shopping .......................................................... 124
Daniela Spanjaard, University of Western Sydney, Australia
Lynne Freeman, University of Technology, Sydney Australia

Mirror, Mirror: Youth Quest for Middle-aged Women ....................................................................................................................... 128
Rana Sobh, Qatar University, Qatar
Effect of a Cause-Related Marketing Campaign in Printed Media, on Disposition to Help and Empathy ........................................ 134
Gabriel Pérez Cifuentes, Colombia
Marcela Tamayo Londoño, Colombia

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

Co-branding in Advertising: The Issue of Category and Image Fit ........................................................................................................ 141
Maggie Geuens, Ghent University, Belgium
Claude Pechoux, Catholic University of Mons (FUCaM), Belgium
Iris Vermeir, University College Ghent & Ghent University, Belgium
Tine Faseur, Ghent University, Belgium

Perceived Influence of Online Reviews: A Comparison of Korea and US .......................................................................................... 143
Cheol Park, Korea University, Korea
ThaeMin Lee, Chungbuk National University, Korea

A Reference Price Effect of Buy-now Prices in Internet Auctions .................................................................................................................. 145
Peter Popkowski Leszczyc, University of Alberta, Canada
Chun Qiu, McGill University, Canada
Yongfu He, University of Alberta, Canada

The Magnitude of Transfer of Image and Performance Associations to Similar and Dissimilar Extensions ..................................... 147
Jean Boisvert, American University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

How Attitude Toward the Extension Mediates Parent Brand Feedback Effects for Line and Brand Extensions in Response to Extension Advertising .................................................................................................................. 150
Nathalie Dens, University of Antwerp, Belgium
Patrick De Pelsmacker, University of Antwerp, Belgium

How Americans Spend Their Time ...................................................................................................................................................... 152
Wagner A. Kamakura, Duke University, USA

Mi Swing Es Tropical–But Not My Consumers
Economic Realism and Cultural Contradictions in Latin American Marketing of Apple’s i-Conic Products ...................................... 153
Nikhilesh Dholakia, University of Rhode Island, USA
Julianne Joy Cabusas, University of Rhode Island, USA
Joonas Rokka, Helsinki School of Economics, Finland
Emílio J. M. Arruda-Filho, Amazon Studies Institute, Pará, Brazil

A Typology of Superstitious Behaviors: Implications for Marketing and Public Policy ............................................................. 155
Rajiv Vaidyanathan, University of Minnesota Duluth, USA
Praveen Aggarwal, University of Minnesota Duluth, USA

Promoting Help for Victims of Child Abuse: Using Positive or Negative, Certain or Uncertain Emotions? ................................ 158
Tine Faseur, Ghent University, Belgium
Maggie Geuens, Ghent University and Vlerick Leuven Ghent Management School, Belgium
Leen Adams, Ghent University, Belgium

East Meets West?
Regulatory Focus and Advertising Appeals in Korea, Canada, and the United States ............................................................. 160
Wonkyong B. Lee, University of Waterloo
Geoffrey T. Fong, University of Waterloo
Mark P. Zanna, University of Waterloo
Timothy Dewhirst, University of Guelph

Affective Responses to Images in Print Advertising: Affect Integration in a Simultaneous Presentation Context .................. 162
Rafi M. M. I. Chowdhury, University of Wollongong, Australia
G. Douglas Olsen, University of Alberta, Canada
John W. Pracejus, University of Alberta, Canada
The Effect of Store Cards on Buyer Behaviour: Is It a Matter of Ignorance or Abuse? ............................................................... 164
Alet C Erasmus, University of Pretoria, Republic of South Africa
Kethuswegape Lebani, University of Pretoria, Republic of South Africa

The Effect of Incidental Out-of-Stock Options on Preferences .............................................................................................. 167
Thomas Kramer, The City University of New York, USA
Ryall Carroll, The City University of New York, USA

Attentional Contrast During Sequential Judgments: A Source of the Number-of-Levels Effect ................................................. 169
Els De Wilde, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal
Alan Cooke, University of Florida, USA
Chris Janiszewski, University of Florida, USA

What's Wrong With Having Too Much Fun?: The Moderating Role of Arousal in the Influence of Positive Mood on Self-Control ............................................................................................................. 171
Alexander (Sasha) Fedorikhin, Indiana University, USA
Vanessa Patrick, University of Georgia, USA

The Influence of Self-Regulatory Focus and Context in the Effectiveness of Emotional Health Campaigns ............................................. 172
Leen Adams, Ghent University, Belgium
Tineke Faseur, Ghent University, Belgium
Maggie Geuens, Ghent University, Belgium

The Effect of Sequential Self-predictions on Behavior Change .................................................................................................. 174
Anneleen Van Kerckhove, Ghent University, Belgium
Maggie Geuens, Ghent University, Belgium
Iris Vermeir, Hogeschool Ghent, Belgium

Consumer Animosity: A Within-Nation Study of Arab and Jewish Israelis' Attitudes toward Foreign Goods ...................................... 176
Mei Rose, University of Puget Sound, USA
Aviv Shoham, University of Haifa, Israel
Gregory M. Rose, University of Washington Tacoma, USA

Competent versus Warm Countries of Origin: The Influence of National Stereotypes on Product Perceptions ................................. 178
Thomas Kramer, Baruch College / CUNY, USA
Michael Chattalas, Fordham University; USA
Hirokazu Takada, Baruch College / CUNY, USA
Yufu Kuwashima, University of Tokyo, Japan

Antecedents and Consequences of Customer Loyalty: An Empirical Synthesis and Reexamination ................................................. 181
Yue Pan, University of Dayton, USA
Frank Tian Xie, Drexel University, USA

Consumption, Social Status and Distinction among Working Class Families ............................................................................. 182
Rodrigo Castilhos, FISUL, Brazil
Carlos Rossi, UFRGS, Brazil

Why Do Consumers Buy Counterfeit Luxury Brands? ......................................................................................................................... 184
Keith Wilcox, Baruch College / CUNY, USA
Hyeong Min Kim, Baruch College / CUNY, USA
Sankar Sen, Baruch College / CUNY, USA
Film Festival

Film Festival Summary ....................................................................................................................................................................... 186
Russell Belk, York University, Canada
Robert Kozinets, York University, Canada

CUCCI OR GUCCI? Exploring the Counterfeiting Consumption On the U.S. and Mexico Border ................................. 186
Sindy Chapa, Texas State University
Laura Servier, University of Texas of the Permian Basin

It all Began with a Kiss, or When Packages Sell a Country ..................................................................................................... 187
Maria Kniazeva, University of San Diego

A Right to Life ............................................................................................................................................................................... 187
Marylouise Caldwell, University of Sydney
Paul Henry, University of Sydney
Stephen Watson

Disney Dreams in China .................................................................................................................................................................. 188
Eric Ping Hung Li, York University
Annamma Joy, University of British Columbia, Okanagan
Russell Belk, York University

VINILEIROS—Those Crazy Guys that Love Their Vinyl Records ................................................................................................. 188
João Pedro dos Santos Fleck, PPGA/EA/UFRGS
Carlos Alberto Vargas Rossi, PPGA/EA/UFRGS
Nicolas Isao Tonsho, EA/UFRGS

Behind the Closed Doors: Gendered Home Spaces in a Gulf Arab State ............................................................................. 189
Russell Belk, York University
Rana Sobh, Qatar University

Videography Workshop

Workshop Abstract
Videography Workshop
Consumer Videography in the Real World ........................................................................................................................................... 190
Russell W. Belk, York University, Canada
Marylouise Caldwell, University of Sidney, Australia
Paul Henry, University of Sidney, Australia
Working Paper Abstracts

Consumer Empowerment and Casino Loyalty Programs: An Examination of Temporal Orientation and Consumer Choice .................................................................................................................................................................................................. 191
Flavia Hendler, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, USA
Kathryn LaTour, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, USA

Store Display of New Masculine Aesthetic Codes: A Semiotic Approach .......................................................................................................................... 192
Nacima Ourahmoune, ESSEC Business School, France
Simon Nyeck, ESSEC Business School, France
Didier Tsala, Universite de Limoges, France

Male Consumers Entering the Private Sphere: An Exploratory Investigation of French Male Involvement, Practices and Interactions Around the Lingerie for Mena Consumption ........................................................................................................... 194
Nacima Ourahmoune, ESSEC Business School, France
Simon Nyeck, ESSEC Business School, France

The Effect of Brand Sound on Consumers’ Brand Evaluation in Japan ................................................................................................................................................................................................... 196
Jae Woo Park, Chiba University of Commerce, Japan
Shin Osera, Toyo University, Japan

Participation and Social Representation of Afro-descendants Individuals Portrayed on Brazilian Magazines Advertisements: 1968–2006 ................................................................................................................................................................ 198
Luiz Valério de Paula Trindade, Universidade Nove de Julho, Brazil
Claudia Rosa Acevedo, Universidade Nove de Julho, Brazil

Social Network Connectedness to Soap Operas, Celebrity Product Endorsement, and Consumer Behavior ............................................................................................................. 200
Valeria Noguti, University of Technology Sydney, Australia
Cristel Antonia Russell, Auckland University of Technology, Australia

Meanings of Ethical Consumption in Fashion and Clothing Markets .......................................................................................................................... 201
Annu Markkula, Helsinki School of Economics, Finland

When Does Personalization Fail? An Analysis of Recommendation Agents .................................................................................................................................................................................................. 203
Kivilcim Dogerlioglu-Demir, Washington State University, USA
Asli Basoglu, Washington State University, USA
Jeffrey Radighieri, Washington State University, USA

The Host of Brand Extensions ............................................................................................................................................................. 204
Leif Hem, Norway
Nina Iversen, Norway
Elin Bolann, Norway

Development of a Scale for French Consumer Brand Equity .................................................................................................................................................................. 206
Haythem Guizani, University Pierre Mendes France, IAE and Cerag, Grenoble, France
Hyane Trigueiro, University Pierre Mendes France, IAE and Cerag, Grenoble, France
Pierre Valette-Florence, University Pierre Mendes France, IAE and Cerag, Grenoble, France

Preventing Youth Obesity: Effective Means of Promotion .................................................................................................................................................................................................. 208
Sabine Boesen-Mariani, CERAG and Université Pierre Mendès France, Grenoble, France
Carolina Obino Corrêa Werle, GEM and CERAG, France
Marie-Laure Gavard-Perret, CERAG and Université Pierre Mendès France, Grenoble, France
Cyrielle Vellera, Université Pierre Mendès France, Grenoble, France

Cultural Values and Purchasing Reasons in Four Latin American Countries. An Exploratory Study ................................................................. 209
Sofía Esqueda, IESA, Marketing Center, Venezuela
Olivia Pérez, IESA, Marketing Center, Venezuela

The Effects of Belonging to Consumer-Managed and Firm-Managed Virtual Brand Communities: The Case of Microsoft XBOX ............................................................................................................. 211
Stefania Ordovas de Almeida, PPGA/FEA/USP, Brazil
Jose Afonso Mazzon, PPGA/FEA/USP, Brazil
Utpal Dholakia, Rice University, USA
The Effects of Negative Emotions Provoked by a Shocking Ad on Drinking and Driving: Measurement of Emotions with Izard’s Scale ................................................................. 213
Imene Becheur, Wesford School of Business, Grenoble, France
Hayan Dib, Wesford School of Business, Grenoble, France
Pierre Valette-Florence, University Pierre Mendes France, IAE and Cerag, Grenoble, France

A Study of the Discourse of Possessions in Coping with the Stigmatized Gay Identity ................................................................. 215
Bill Pereira, Escola Brasileira de Administracao Publica e de Empresas-EBAPER/FGV, Brazil
Eduardo Ayrosa, Escola Brasileira de Administracao Publica e de Empresas-EBAPER/FGV, Brazil

I Feel Bad, Buy, Feel the Pain and Buy Again: Cases Studies of Compulsive Buyers ................................................................. 216
Katia Bonfanti, NUTIEP, Private Clinic, Brazil
Celso Augusto de Matos, PPGA-EA-UFRGS, Brazil
Leonardo Teodoro Falcão, NUTIEP, Private Clinic, Brazil

Cultural Values and Leisure Activities Preferences Among Latin American Young Consumers. An Exploratory Study .................. 217
Sofía Esqueda, IESA, Marketing Center, Venezuela
Olivia Pérez, IESA, Marketing Center, Venezuela
Omar Varela, Nicholls State University, USA

Environmental Barriers to Consumer Acculturation ............................................................................................................................. 219
Garrett Coble, Oklahoma State University, USA
Fernando Jimenez, Oklahoma State University, USA

Trust, Value and Loyalty in Relational Exchanges between Students and Higher Education Institutions ................................................. 220
Sergio W. Carvalho, University of Manitoba, Canada
Marcio de Oliveira Mota, Faculdade Christus and Faculdade Integrada do Ceara, Brazil

Technology in Low-income Consumers: An Ethnographical Perspective ........................................................................................................ 221
Sofía Esqueda, IESA, Marketing Centre, Venezuela
Larian Hernandez, DATANALISIS–Qualitative Studies Unit, Venezuela

Vanity and Consumption: How Physical Vanity Influences the Consumer Behavior ................................................................. 222
Paulo Ricardo Zilio Abdala, PPGA / EA / UFRGS-UNILASALLE / CANOAS, Brazil
Carlos Alberto Vargas Rossi, PPGA / EA / UFRGS, Brazil

Scream Out Loud or Lie on the Couch? Investigating the Experience of Watching Football on the Stadium versus on TV ............. 223
Alexandre Carauta, EBAPE-FGV, Brazil
Eduardo Ayrosa, EBAPE-FGV, Brazil

The Connection between Symbolic Benefits and Youth Identity: A Hybrid Methodological Approach ........................................ 224
Diego Ferla, Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos, Brazil
Teniza da Silveira, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil

Effects of Situational versus Representative Attributions on American Brands ................................................................. 226
Justin Gressel, American University of Sharjah, UAE
Cathy Chen, Lee Kong Chian School of Business, Singapore
Durairaj Maheswaran, New York University, USA

Economic Characterization of Low Income Families in the City of Sao Paulo Using Electricity Consumption as a Predictive Variable ................................................................. 227
Eduardo Francisco, FGV, Brazil
Eric Cohen, Ibmec, Brazil
Felipe Zambaldi, UMESP, Brazil
Francisco Aranha, FGV, Brazil

Automatic Lover: Linking Consumer Practice to Cultural Texts about the Vibrator ................................................................. 229
Luciana Walther, Coppead Graduate School of Business, Brazil

Attitudes Towards Globalization in an Emerging (Dominican Republic) versus a Developed (U.S.A.) Market ......................... 232
Michael Chattalas, Fordham University, USA
Yanely Reyes, GoldmanSachs, USA
For Better or For Worse: Moderating Effects of Relationship Age and Continuance Commitment on the Service Satisfaction-Word-of-Mouth Relationship ................................................................. 234
Chatura Ranaweera, Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada
Kalyani Menon, Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada

Mortality Salience and Extrinsic Goal Orientation: The Moderating Effects of Self-Esteem and Materialistic Values ..................... 236
Jaehoon Lee, University of Texas at San Antonio, USA
L. J. Shrum, University of Texas at San Antonio, USA

The Street Open Market Fairs (Ferias Libres) in Chile: Their Acts and Experiences ................................................................. 237
Luz Maria Molinos, Universidad de los Andes, Chile
Luis Saez, Universidad de Santiago, Chile
Daniella Saldivia, Universidad Adolfo Ibanez, Chile
Francisca Sorolla, Universidad Adolfo Ibanez, Chile

Local Management of Global Advertising Campaigns: Identifying Different Attitude Profiles among Brazilian Professionals ........................................................................................................... 238
Josmar Andrade, Faculdades Integradas Rio Branco, Brazil
Jose Afonso Mazzon, FEA-USP, Brazil

Neuroimaging Techniques–Promising Research Method also for Practical Marketing Research? ................................................ 240
Monika Koller, Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration, Austria

Brazilian Research in Consumer Behavior Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior: A Brief Analytic Review ................................. 241
Eliane Matos, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Brazil
Ricardo Veiga, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Brasil
Carlos Alberto Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Goncalves, Brazil
Tales Lacerda, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Brazil

Factors that Influence the Brand Loyalty and Dealer Loyalty of the Automotive Industry: The Case of Mexican Consumers in the Central Region of Mexico
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Tonantzin Gonzalez Cervantes, Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey-Campus Toluca, México

Author Index ........................................................................................................................................................................ 246
How Can Consumer Researchers Increase Well-Being?
The Workshop on Transformative Consumer Behavior
Teresa M. Pavia, University of Utah

SUMMARY

Forty one researchers from around the world met to discuss research and themes related to transformative consumer research (TCR). Participants hailed from around the globe including South Africa, Finland, France, Columbia, Canada, Australia, South Africa, the United States and, of course, our host country, Brazil. The international nature of this workgroup was essential to our understanding of the cultural and regional nuances of some TCR concepts. All participants were grateful to the Professors Lowrey, Hernandez and Acevedo for their effort to make the conference and workshop possible.

The day opened with a discussion of TCR as an initiative arising from within the Association of Consumer Research designed to coalesce and motivate research oriented towards increasing human and environmental welfare. Our initial discussion addressed questions among researchers regarding the nature of transformative consumer research as opposed to, say, macro-marketing or social marketing. TCR was described as an open tent. It is an initiative to encourage research, cross disciplinary discussion and dissemination of results from any discipline or interest area (such as social marketing) that has co-aligned goals of improving human and environmental well-being. It was described as less of a brand-new-idea and more as an effort by the leading consumer research organization to support and organize researcher with these shared interests.

The extended abstracts here demonstrate the breadth and depth of the research that was presented. Each session had extensive time for reflection and discussion. Rather than distill each session, this essay will attempt to capture the themes that emerged. Broadly speaking, the TCR topics that were covered could be placed on one of two areas. The first area has to do with overconsumption (or means to address overconsumption)–obesity, addictions, debt management, energy depletion, pollution, and so on. The second area has to do with impacts of modernity–disintegration of social structures, the disassociation between consumption and production, the essential role of media in society, consumers with a very fluid approach to marketing communications, and increasingly bifurcated societies (e.g., haves and have nots, educated and non-educated, technophiles and technophobes, etc.).

Regarding the first area, participants noted that some overconsumption related issues are of interest to everyone today and that these are generally complex problems. Global warming, unhealthy behaviors and consumer debt are such issues. However, the perspective on such issues may vary between developed and developing countries. For example, in North American the idea of credit/debt has evolved over the last sixty years from one with negative connotations to normative consumer behavior. During this time consumers used credit/debt to increase consumer welfare although, as we know, the curve is an inverted U, with consumer welfare eventually decreasing as debt consumption increases. However, in economies where availability of credit is a fairly new phenomenon, the consumer culture does not have decades of normative debt use to point to as a role model of “just enough” consumption. Here the problem is not one of communicating good debt versus bad debt per se, but rather promoting a social dialog regarding the meaning of consumer credit, how it fits into one’s life, what it means, what it enables, and then, good debt versus bad debt.

While fewer papers directly addressed the second area, the effects of modernity, this theme was a consistent thread in the discussions that followed and actually raised the most provocative questions of the day. In a fast-paced, advanced consumer society what does increasing human and environmental welfare mean? The choice of a traditional car versus a hybrid car can be see as just another consumer choice problem in which individual happiness and well-being is maximized in a choice set where “helping the environment” is just another attribute. But broader consumer questions regarding evolving human rights, managing competing rights, and inequalities brought on by the pursuit of happiness and satisfaction feel less like typical consumer behavior topics. Similar, participants acknowledged a sense of cynicism among consumers regarding corporations’ desire to “do good”. As corporations struggle to understand what it means to maximize shareholder value and still do good, marketing stands as the conduit for products and messages that straddle this gap. How does one communicate with an increasingly cynical consumer; what is the role of marketing in this setting; and where is the locus of responsibility for increasing human and environmental well-being?

Much of what TCR addresses is imbalance. Imbalances exist between the power of corporations, governments, institutions, etc. and the individual consumer. Some TCR researchers seek to understand and redress such imbalances by holding up a mirror to allow us to clearly see the underlying processes driving this problem. Others are more concerned with imbalances in consumption (the first area addressed above) and seek to understand and redress these often through improved communications. Still others are concerned with big picture issues (the second area addressed above) often posing provocative issues that challenge current assumptions. Finally, most participants were obliquely working to increase social capital–to increase human understanding of each other (particularly outside one’s own native culture), to increase the efficacy of efforts to improve the environment, and to increase our ability to produce products, services and concepts that actually increase well-being.

With regard to increasing human and environmental well-being, participants voiced a frustrated desire to “complete the circle” and achieve one of TCR’s stated goals, that of actionable implementation. Researchers struggle to understand how implementation fits within the academic job description and to determine the researcher’s role in applying TCR knowledge. ACR’s initiative to help promote TCR-related work in the media was seen as helpful as were other venues such as presentations at conferences that are also attended by non-academic participants. Workshops like this one–full day activities that allow for extensive discussion–were seen as especially productive and a next step might be to include non-academics engaged in TCR in a workshop setting.

In addition to implementing research findings, participants discussed how one can isolate significant theoretical questions rooted in real world problems. Participatory action research (Ozanne and Saatcioglu 2008), PAR, offers one such route, but previous such research engagements by workshop attendees raised some cautionary notes. While PAR can uncover important issues, the focal groups for PAR are often completely uninterested in the lengthy and time consuming process of publication in our top journals often opting for more immediate forms of dissemination such as conferences, practitioner magazines, speaker series and so on. The most successful PAR
engagements that provide enough time to produce top tier publications can be traced to collaborative work with other non-academic researchers. This suggests that one supportive role that ACR could play in fostering TCR is to provide a forum for academic and non-academic researchers in which these people could come together around the common goal of increased well-being with a clear understanding of the differing contributions the collaborators bring to the engagement.

In summary, the overarching theme was that TCR was about embeddedness. We cannot increase A’s well-being if it destroys B’s life. At its heart TCR requires the big view because human and environmental welfare is an integrated issue. We cannot talk about consumer welfare or consumer well-being without talking about the social, environmental, and cultural milieu in which any one person exists. TCR is indeed a big tent—it includes traditional consumer behavior questions such as motivations, attitudes and choice, but it also includes deep questions regarding the processes and outcomes that impact the consumer who is embedded in an integrated world. In addition, successful academic TCR work requires the researcher to be embedded in a larger effort that includes team members who assist in dissemination and keep the theoretical work grounded in real problems that increase well-being.

**ABSTRACTS**

**“The Rebel Co-Creator: Exploring the iPhone Unlocking Phenomenon”**
Nikhilesh Dholakia, University of Rhode Island, USA
Joonas Rokka, Helsinki School of Economics, Finland
Caroline Wilcox, University of Rhode Island, USA
Julianne Joy Cabusas, University of Rhode Island, USA
Emílio J. M. Arruda-Filho, Amazon Studies Institute, Pará, Brazil

Do consumers gain or lose from extra-corporate acts of brand creation, co-creation, and mutation–acts that are outside the ambit of the brand-owning corporation? Specifically, does consumer welfare increase from unauthorized acts of brand modification, acts disapproved by the brand owners, but which some consumers seem to want? Could such acts be construed in transformative consumer terms, with emancipatory-beneficent impacts (Mick 2006)? What is the reaction of the brand-owning corporations to such acts—retaliatory, accepting, forgiving, adaptive, benign neglect, wink-and-a-nod tacit endorsement?

This issue is explored using the context of the unauthorized “unlocking” of Apple’s iPhone in global markets. Put another way: Is the rebel co-creator who is doing the unauthorized but popular modifications of iconic brands (Holt 2004) a Robin Hood figure who steals from the corporation to help the consumer? Or is the rebel co-creator merely acting out an agential self-centric plan, with no expectations of beneficial ripples?

During 2007-2008, the unauthorized unlocking of iPhones became a very pervasive phenomenon because Apple introduced the highly sought iconic brand in the United States and, with some time lag, in a few selected global markets. The desire and demand for the product, however, was instantly global. The empirical thrust of the paper is on this period (May 2007 to May 2008), when iPhones were globally desired but only selectively and locally authorized. We present some netnographic, web-based evidence of the rebellious unlocking acts and the corporate reactions. We then explore the resulting consumer-corporate interplay.

The primary approach of the paper, however, is not empirical but conceptual and theoretical. A matrix of impacts on consumers (gain, loss, and neutral) and similar impacts on the brand-owning corporation is employed to represent a variety of acts of brand creation and co-creation. Included in co-creation—in our conceptual frame—are crass acts of piracy and “knocking off”, the tributary acts of close copycat emulation, and the rebel acts of unauthorized brand mutation. In the case of the iPhone, the unauthorized unlocking acts were rebellious because they provided product access and usability to millions of global consumers who, prior to the defiant unlocking, were officially excluded from iPhone’s customer base because of Apple’s strategy of gradual global rollout. The contribution of the paper is an interpretive theory of acts of rebel co-creation of brands, set in the context of interplay of user-corporate roles. We explore the meaning of these acts for consumers and the implications for the brand-owning corporations.

**“Virtual Piracy or Resistance? An Investigation of the Brazilian Digital Music Consumer”**
Denise Franca Barros, EBAPE/FGV-RJ, Brazil
João Felipe Rammelt Sauerbronn, EGN/Unigranrio, Brazil
Leonardo Vasconcelos Cavalry Darbilly, EBAPE/FGV-RJ, Brazil
Alessandra Mello, EBAPE/FGV-RJ, Brazil

The Brazilian phonographic market has witnessed a series of significant changes over the past few years. From 1999 onwards, powerful organizations began to lose leadership positions in the market, as well as their high indices of profitability. This global phenomenon has been the object of several studies (e.g. Clays, 1993; Botelho, Botelho and Almeida, 2003; Filgueiras and Bramble, 2002). Such studies, nevertheless, usually focus on the situation of the organizations, especially major record companies that experienced drastically reduction of profits or the strategies that have been adopted by those organizations to solve the problem. New technologies such as MP3 and programs that allow the exchange of musical files between users are singled out as being the cause of this alteration in scenario. The increasing popularity of these technologies for the transfer of musical files via the Internet paved the way for the onset of the phenomenon known as virtual piracy.

Mostly of the consumer behavior inquiry has been on what makes an individual a “happy” consumer or buyer (Fischer, 2001; Oak, 2002). It is clear that the main focus has been on managerial implications rather than on consumer behalf. There is still a lack of consumer resistance or anti-consumption movement studies (Hemetsberger, 2005; Pit, Kozinets And Shankar, 2007). As the marketing discourse offers forms and standards of consumption, the consumer continuous recreate meanings of products, practices and uses (Belk, 1988). These new interpretations, uses or meanings for products and/or brands can be seen as practices of consumer resistance (Peñaloza And Price, 1993). Resistance can be understood as any behavior, attitude or discourse opposed to the dominant power (Dobscha, 1998) and, in this
way, different behaviors from those determined by marketing can be defined as consumer resistance (Peñaloza and Price, 1993; Close and Zinkhan, 2007). In this study we seek to investigate the discourse(s) of regular music downloader and how those consumption practices are related to consumer resistance.

Due to the controversial nature of the subject, interaction among individuals can show a much wider scope of opinions and contradictions. Fourteen college students professedly and openly music downloaders for their own consumption, volunteered to participate in discussions. The groups were formed taking into account the criteria proposed by Balch and Mertens (1999) and data was analyzed following the principles of discourse analysis (Gill, 2000).

We analyzed the consumers’ discourses taking into account the theoretic frame of resistance and consumption and their relationship with the consumption and the illegal acquisition of music. From this perspective, we tried to observe how the informants deal with situations of acquisition of music through download or piracy. The justifications for this behavior of consumption were explored and confronted with their different classifications. We could identify four main forms of resistance by music download consumers: 1) opposing force to the market, as proposed by Dobicha (1998); 2) consumer agency, in agreement with Poster (1992), Peñaloza and Price (1993); 3) the “exit”, according to Hirschman (1973), Szmigin, Carrigan and Bekin (2007); and 4) divergence of market practices, according to Close and Zinkham (2007).

“Embodiment and the Marketplace”

Marlys Mason, Oklahoma State University, USA
Teresa Pavia, University of Utah, USA

Consumer behavior has two broad assumptions regarding embodiment. The first assumption is that everyone is basically healthy except for a few minor detours. The second is that embodiment has been considered as a means to an end. For example, it may be a means of expression (e.g., tattoos, plastic surgery) or a means of achieving pleasure (e.g., eating, leisure). It can be a means of altering consciousness (e.g., drug abuse, skydiving). However, considerably less attention has been given to the body as a constraint on consumption (e.g., disability, illness), and almost no attention has been given to the body as the ground of knowledge (Gould 1991 is an exception). As the body experiences limitations (e.g., fatigue, loss of hearing, loss of cognitive capacity) the knowledge the consumer has of various consumption experiences changes (ask anyone who has a bad cold how the food tastes, for example).

Ettlinger (2004) uses the term disarticulation to capture the disconnect between an individuals’ thoughts and feelings relative to the dominant norms of the markets, communities and economy in which he lives. The emotional and cognitive energy linked to disarticulation can lead to change, but its power requires the confirmation to the individual that the problem is real, and the opportunity for similarly affected individuals to connect with each other in a manner that takes the discussion beyond complaining.

While opportunities have grown for consumer with illness and impairment to meet, especially on the internet, generating macro-market change may still be difficult. Physical illness and/or impairment are a peculiar uniting factor. As Thompson (1997) notes, “Disability unites a highly marked, heterogeneous group whose only commonality is being considered abnormal” (p 24). Individuals denoted as ill or impaired may have very different experiences of the body, abilities, and needs, and little in common with each other except that they deviate from prescribed norms. Their diversity may prevent them from uniting and taking action for change despite the similar label paced upon them.

We explore how the embodiment that consumers experience collides with normative assumption that the market makes of consumers (e.g., ability to hear, ability to think about the future). Guided by a grounded, interpretative approach, we investigate the behaviors and meaning that individuals link to coping with their bodily and health challenges when the market is structured for a norm from which they feel excluded. More than 60 phenomenological, in-depth interviews were conducted with consumers experiencing acute disease diagnosis, chronic illness, disability, and end-of-life issues. Our analysis begins to develop a framework related to what consumers actually know about products, services, etc. given their embodiment and offers insights about the metanarratives of consumer functioning that exist in our discipline. The net result should provide a more accurate picture of consumption from the perspective of a fallible human body. The research has TCR relevancy because better knowledge of what consumer know and experience regarding products and services may stimulate better offerings for everyone involved.

“What Basis for Consumer Rights? The Case of Credit Card Debt”

Paul Henry, University of Sydney, Australia
Michael Paton, University of Sydney, Australia

Alarming newspaper headlines about the explosion of credit card debt and social ills can be found across the Western World. Who is to blame? Is it the card providers seducing and preying upon vulnerable consumers, or is it foolish, frivolous consumers that lack discipline and willpower. Examination of the public discourse suggests the answer is not ‘either—or.’ Attribution of blame on the card marketers tends to be associated with calls to invoke consumer rights, whereas attributions around consumer foolishness tend to be associated with calls for individual responsibility. This paper takes up the idea of consumer rights and critically evaluates possible bases for ‘rights’ in the consumer setting by looking back into the broader human rights literature.

Rights claims are invoked as the basis for ethical treatment of others across many domains of life (Consumers International, 2004). They range from broader social and political rights, such as right to life, right to vote, right to be left alone by government, right to social services, education, health care, and extra holiday periods, through to specific consumer rights such as right of redress for defective product purchase, right to accurate information, right to fair price for product purchase, and many more. This myriad of rights claims raises questions regarding legitimacy of each. Are they just assertions or is there is a theoretical grounding behind rights?

Given these questions my first step was to review alternative theories of human rights. Then the case of consumer credit cards was examined through this theoretical lens to assess the fit between broader human rights theory and the case of credit cards and consumer rights.

Alternative positions on human rights generally stem from three basic positions (Morris, 2006); 1) the idea that rights discourse is a product of predominant social and cultural values specific to period and place; 2) the idea that rights are carved out through power
struggles between interest groups; 3) and arguments for naturally grounded universal rights where humans share particular common
qualities that have intrinsic value worth protecting. A framework was developed that consists of a combination the three positions. Specific
ideas are drawn from moral philosophy where Gewirth (1998) argues that fulfilment of aspirations and capabilities represent fundamental
enablers of a good life. Another key source draws on Turner’s (1993) sociological approach to rights.
My analysis of the public discourse around credit card debt revealed two dimensions of tension. The first dimension is a call for
individual responsibility versus a call for protection of consumer rights. The second dimension is the perception that credit cards either
facilitate or inhibit quality of life and fulfilment. Position in this two dimensional space is found to be dependent on beliefs and perceptions
about four aspects of Turner’s rights model a) degree of human frailty, b) extent of institutional precariousness, c) level of conflict of
interest, and d) extent and locus of sympathy. This discourse will be illustrated in the presentation. The rights model can be used to
understand the conditions where call for consumer rights can be either amplified or inhibited.

“How Can Consumer Researchers Increase Well-Being? The Workshop on Transformative Consumer Behavior

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understand the conditions where call for consumer rights can be either amplified or inhibited.

“An Empirical Investigation of Consumer Credit Satisfaction and Loyalty in a Large Brazilian Supermarket Chain”
Eric Cohen, Ibmec Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
In this research, we investigate the consumer relationships of Carrefour, the world’s second largest world retailer that competes neck-to-neck in the Brazilian marketplace with Companhia Brasileira de Distribuição and Wal-Mart.
Using a sample of 400 cardholders, card usage data was overlaid with information obtained in a customer survey. This information was subjected to statistical methods in order to support the proposition of models for the constructs of customer Satisfaction, Value, Quality, Attitudinal Loyalty and Behavioral Loyalty.
According to Dick and Basu (1994), attitudinal Loyalty occurs when the customer demonstrates his or her willingness to continue
doing business with the company, in spite of more attractive offers from other competitors. Behavioral Loyalty manifests itself through
traditional metrics like number of transactions, frequency and monetary value.
After verifying construct convergence and discriminant validity, an empirical model was tested in line with current theoretical
thinking.
An important contribution of this research is the use of Life Event Analysis in a Marketing context to build a predictive risk model
for customer attrition. This is an emerging statistical technique in Business Administration. The analysis shows that this model is effective
in the prediction of customer churn, a problem that affects both financial service companies and retailers.
The evidence found in this study shows that, for this particular private label card, purchasing power and access to alternative financial
products plays a key part in the customer’s loyalty behavior. Specifically, we demonstrate that low income customers are more satisfied, and more willing to recommend the product to others, as well as to increase spending. However, these customers have limited purchasing power, which prevents them from spending more. In contrast, upscale Carrefour cardholders are less satisfied, but would need additional incentives in order to increase their spending.
An improvement in customer attitude towards the provider leads to customer preference, and the long term loyalty, particularly in
competitive markets (GRACIOSO, 2003). In addition, the propositions tested in this research are important for Marketing practitioners
and regulators for building lasting customer relationships, as well as policies leading to financially stable, healthy consumer financing,
and providing financial resources to Brazilian households (JONES and SASSER, 1995; LA LONDE and ZINSZER, 1976; DAY, 1994).

“The Redefining of Debt: Vulnerable Consumers and the Acceptance of Debt in Australia”
Linda Brennan, Victoria University, Australia
Wayne Binney, Victoria University, Australia
There has been a widespread increase in the use of consumer credit and therefore consumer indebtedness. Some of this increase has
been within that segment of the population least able to afford debt of any kind—welfare recipients. This qualitative study with 120 research
participants through a series of semi-structured in-depth interviews demonstrates some surprising attitudes to debt, as well as differences
in peoples’ perceptions of acceptable debt and their debt-management strategies. The combination of powerful market forces which help
to ‘normalise’ the use of credit with a widespread lack of financial knowledge among vulnerable consumers makes debt a major issue of
socio-political concern.
In Australia, income support recipients comprise groups of age pensioners, students, the disabled, the unemployed and single parents.
One main government agency is responsible for delivering social security services to the community. This study was primarily interested
in examining how participants might define debt, how they might classify their debts according to acceptability, and why some forms of
indebtedness or borrowing fail to be seen as debt at all. The connection between attitudes toward debt and repayment behaviour was also
investigated.
Participating were very willing to describe their level of credit usage and attitudes to borrowing. However, they were unwilling to
describe the use of credit as ‘debt.’ Debt was seen as something that could not or would not be repaid—it was not seen as the amount owing
on borrowings or the amount of credit that was outstanding at a particular time. Participants drew distinctions between acceptable and
unacceptable debts and condoned future-oriented borrowing and rejected accumulation of debt for ‘everyday’ expenses as a mismanage-
ment of funds. Mortgages, for example, were not recognised as debts.
In addition to the dichotomy between debt and credit, the rationale behind repayment of debts was largely informed by the nature of
the relationship between the borrower and the lender—thus, participants prioritised repayment to relatives and friends before lending
agencies, despite the higher interest rates incurred as a result. The priority for the repayment of debt would be family and friends first,
followed by those organisations “which set the collectors on to you,” and finally, the income support agency or government
instrumentality. Participants did not think reducing their overall borrowings was a method of becoming debt free. Often the source of
borrowing was an interest accumulating loan (low social obligation) in exchange for an interpersonal loan (high social obligation); thereby
exacerbating the accrual of debt.
In conclusion, this study reflects the position that vulnerable consumers suffer from debt but are unlikely to seek help in the right
quarters (if at all). The ways that participants in this study rationalise debt as an everyday occurrence and repay family and friends first
before lending agencies points to a failure to recognise and implement good financial management strategies. Consumer education targeting this failure is recommended. On behalf of vulnerable consumers, lending agencies must ensure transparency in their communications and implement adequate safety nets. A “culture of debt” is reflected in this study as the vulnerable often lack the empowerment necessary to extricate themselves from debt burdens. With the participants in this study depending upon governmental income support, the findings may hold implications for welfare reform. Currently, Australian income support recipients are paying a high price for their lack of knowledge about managing debt.

“How Understanding Drivers of the Joy of Giving Can Help Nonprofits Increase Donations”
Michal Strahilevitz, Golden Gate University, USA

Both contributing money to a good cause and acquiring more for oneself offer benefits to consumers. Indeed, in pursuit of the positive emotions that helping others and having more for oneself each create, people are often willing to sacrifice valuable resources such as money, time and comfort. The research presented identifies ways in which giving behavior is similar to other forms of consumer behavior, particularly hedonic consumption.

A series of experiments demonstrates that similar to “sensory-specific satiation,” individuals may exhibit “cause-specific satiation.” Data is presented from both hypothetical contribution decisions and choices involving real money and real hedonic consumption. The results suggest that, similar to the experience of individuals indulging in their favorite foods, “overindulging” in one cause (e.g., saving children, protecting endangered animals, supporting cancer research, or planting new forests) can lead to satiation. However, just as we can regain our cravings for certain foods if we allow time to pass after overindulging, the ability to enjoy giving to one’s favorite charity may be renewed by taking breaks between donation experiences. As one might expect, larger budgets for both food and donations lead to greater variety seeking. However, charity-loyalty can be encouraged both by spreading donations out over time, and by creating diverse donation experiences within a given charity. Analogous to eating more jelly beans or more M&M’s, if they come in different colors, it is found that more money is given to a specific charity if that charity offers a menu of donation options. It is also found that the donation choices of peers can influence satiation, but not as much as one’s own prior choices. Similar results are found with hedonic food consumption. Alternative explanations for the effects presented and the implications for understanding the hedonic nature of charitable giving are discussed.

The talk concludes with implications for fund-raising. This includes the potential effectiveness of “charity contracts,” where donors sign long-term commitments to sponsor a specific “unit of need” (be it a child, school, or stray animal), the importance of planning the timing of solicitations, and the wisdom of creating multiple unique “flavors” of donation experiences within a given charity.

“The Relative Value of Environmental Certification and Engagement”
André Carlos Martins Menck, Universidade Federal de Uberlândia, Brazil
João Bento de Oliveira Filho, Universidade Federal de Uberlândia, Brazil

The usage of external, independent certification has been growing. In particular, many retailers are increasingly demanding and many manufacturers have been adopting green labels. Moreover, many firms engage in actions of environmental protection, either linked to its products and brands or not, as practices of social responsibility. However, there is much concern among the companies, regulators and NGOs about the true marketing value of such actions. In particular, the certification of environmental protection on the label of products has a marketing value not completely well understood. Whereas the environmental certification seems to indicate a more reactive social corporate posture, the real involvement in actions of environmental protection seems to be associated with a more pro-activates attitude in relation to the consumer’s desires in society. This paper presents an empiric study that tries to understand the relative value that consumers attribute both to the environmental certification and the real environmental engagement.

This study is based on an experiment with 335 respondents, in a 3x2x2 completely between-subject design. Three price levels were manipulated, both in the presence and absence of independent green-labeling certification, and in the presence and absence of real actions of environmental protection (unrelated to the product itself). The independent variable is product choice, across alternatives otherwise similar.

The results indicate that, of the two approaches (green-label and environmental engagement), only the real engagement in actions of environmental protection helps to explain the choice of the product. In addition, the effective environmental engagement of the company influences the evaluation given by the consumer both to the product and to the company, whereas green-label certification environmental seems to fail in improving the image, even the image of the product bearing the green-label. Such results have important managerial implications. The companies should prefer using the real engagement on environmental protection, probably leaving to the environmental certification the job of strengthening its B2B relationships with retailers and the like.

“The Organic Farmers’ Markets and the New Forms of Community: An Analysis of the Established Social Links at Periodic Spaces of Food Commercialization”
Gustavo Cascardi, Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil
Eugenio Ávila Pedrozo, Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil
Tania Nunes da Silva, Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil

The organic farmers’ markets are differentiated spaces of food commercialization. The social links that occur in these spaces seem to be of significant importance to many consumers, also being able to provide a sense of community.

Seeking to deepen the knowledge concerning the factors that take the individuals to choose the farmers’ markets as local of acquisition of organic foods, the research is analyzing the dynamics of the social relations established by the consumers in these spaces. The main aims of this study are to analyze the existence and the meanings of a sense of community in the organic farmers’ markets. Additionally, the research must explore if this “community” has the potential of assisting the consumers to transform their habits into something considered more healthful and sustainable.
The evidences must be collected mainly through in-depth interviews and participant observations in two traditional organic farmers’ markets that periodically occur in the city of Porto Alegre (RS) and São Paulo (SP).

The theoretical and analytical framework is inspired mainly, but not exclusively, in the constructions concerning the idea of brand community (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). As such, the three constructs used by the authors to analyze the features of the brand communities will be investigated: (a) consciousness of a kind, defined as the feeling of intrinsic connection between the members and the collective sense of differentiation in relation to others that do not belong to the community; (b) existence of shared rituals and traditions, that maintain the shared culture, history, and the consciousness; (c) a sense of moral responsibility, that means that the members feel a sense of duty to the community and to its members.

Although the research is in the initial stage, the bibliographical revision and preliminary participant observations seem to indicate the existence of a sense of community in the organic farmers’ markets. It also can be observed that some consumers seem to make efforts in the direction of avoiding the use of plastic bags.

We believe that the knowledge of what means to the consumers to be part of this “community” can be very useful for the various actors interested in strengthening this important modality of organic food commercialization.

“Cigarette Product Descriptors Offering Potential Reassurance to Health Concerned Consumers”
Timothy Dewhirst, University of Guelph, Canada

Tobacco firms have undergone particular scrutiny for the marketing of filtered and low-tar cigarette brands, in which product descriptors, such as “mild,” “light,” “ultra-light,” “slim,” “smooth,” and “natural” have commonly been used. More than 30 countries have now banned the use of “light” and “mild” as cigarette product descriptors (Hoek 2006). The World Health Organization’s Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), the world’s first public health treaty, is legally binding for those countries that ratify it and stipulates in Article 11 that effective measures be taken, in accordance with each country’s legislation, to ensure that the packaging and labelling of tobacco products is not likely to “create an erroneous impression about its characteristics, health effects, hazards or emissions.”

For this paper, internal tobacco industry documents and promotions from advertising archives were reviewed to give insight about consumer research pertaining to the meaning of cigarette product descriptors. Consumer attitudes, opinions, and behavior have been routinely and extensively studied by tobacco firms and the market research firms and ad agencies it has hired; these studies and reports have been revealed through public litigation and public legislative hearings, and have provided researchers with an unparalleled look into the internal marketing strategies and consumer research of major corporations such as British American Tobacco (BAT), Philip Morris, RJ Reynolds, Brown & Williamson, and Lorillard (for a discussion on approaches to searching tobacco industry documents, see Malone and Balbach 2000; Carter 2005; Anderson, Dewhirst, and Ling 2006).

The internal corporate documents review reveals that promotional claims relating to “mild,” “light,” “slim,” “smooth,” and “natural” cigarettes are seemingly designed to offer reassurance to consumers concerned about the health risks of smoking. For example, according to BAT documentation, communication strategies “should be directed towards providing consumer reassurance [emphasis in original] about cigarettes and the smoking habit. This can be provided in different ways, e.g. by claimed low deliveries, by the perception of low deliveries and by the perception of ‘mildness’” (Short 1977, p.3). Internal documentation from BAT (1984, p.102690403) also shows that “it is useful to consider lights more as a third alternative to quitting and cutting down—a branded hybrid of smokers’ unsuccessful attempts to modify their habit on their own.”

Market research prepared for Philip Morris revealed that “smoking an ultra low tar cigarette seems to relieve some of the guilt of smoking and provide an excuse not to quit” (Goldstein/Krall Marketing Resources 1979, p.2040067545). Moreover, Philip Morris found that several consumers consider reduced circumference cigarettes (i.e., “slims”) to be a safer alternative relative to those brands with regular physical dimensions, based on the impression that less tobacco was being consumed rather than based on the actual tar and nicotine deliveries (Ryan 1987, p.2057762567). Meanwhile, “smoothness” is commonly meant to convey less irritation and less harshness to consumers, whereas “natural” is often used to describe menthol brands, thereby suggesting that no artificial flavors are added to the tobacco and that the taste is fresh (i.e., aftertaste improvement) and cool (i.e., irritation reduction, smooth).

Overall, these findings are disconcerting from a public health standpoint, given that smokers using “light” cigarettes have lower odds of smoking cessation and may use “light” cigarettes as an alternative to quitting (Tindle et al. 2006). Implications for package labelling, promotion, and policy are discussed.

“Preventing Youth Obesity: Effective Means of Promotion”
Sabine Boesen-Mariani, University of Grenoble, France
Carolina Werle, GEM and CERAG, France
Marie-Laure Gavard-Perron, University of Grenoble, France
Cyrille Vellaera, University of Grenoble, France

In most OECD countries, the issue of childhood and adolescent obesity implies a variety of health and social consequences which often continue into adulthood. Therefore, implementing effective prevention campaigns directed at this population is crucial to controlling the obesity epidemic. Many contemporary obesity prevention campaigns base their arguments on health risks or benefits linked to prevention behaviors. The conceptual foundations of these campaigns rely on traditional preventive health behavior models such as the Protection Motivation Theory (Rogers 1975) and the Health Belief Model (Rosenstock 1974). However, these models focus on health risks neglecting social risks and adolescents are sensitive to social norms and to the positive or negative consideration of their peers.

Previous research show that messages that put forth health related risks were not efficient; these arguments do not dissuade adolescents and can even create a positive image of cigarettes (Duffy and Burton 2000; Hastings and MacFadyen 2002; Pechmann et al. 2003; Schoenbachler and Whittier 1996). The adolescents’ social susceptibility leads us to suppose that campaigns using social arguments could be more effective.

Arguments that focus on social issues seem to be more efficient in the short term because they address concerns that are important to the adolescents. Some scholars have demonstrated that this supposition works for anti-smoking campaigns (Ho 1998; Pechmann and...
Knight 2002; Pechmann and Ratneshwar 1994). Therefore, this study goal is to verify if these conclusions can be applied to obesity campaigns and to collect the perceptions of French youth concerning obesity in order to prepare our quantitative studies.

We conducted a qualitative study with youths from 9 to 17 years of age (15 in-depth interviews). Our conclusions demonstrate that the participants seem to know the “rules” (what they should do) and the preventive messages. However, it seems unclear if these messages prompt an attitude and behavior transformation. Moreover, the negative critiques voiced by some of the participants raise the question: young people know the “talk” but are they actually sensitive to it? Regarding the perceived risk participants associated with obesity (physical, health and social risk), the obesity social consequences appear as the most important. They mentioned: discrimination, rejection, mockery for all ages and the oldest brought up elements linked to love life and getting a job. All the respondents seemed to be conscious of the existence of a physical standard and mentioned that the over-weight person is different and therefore rejected.

Our results seem to confirm that an argument based on the social consequences of obesity will be more efficient because it is closer to the present concerns of young people. Current research also reinforces the importance of adapting the preventive communication, especially when adolescents are the target. These results will help us determine how to design more effective obesity prevention campaigns and our proposals will be tested in upcoming experiments which will take place in French schools focusing on underprivileged children (greater risk). Our conclusions are intended to provide concrete recommendations to public policymakers and health-related institutions in charge of obesity prevention campaigns.

“Teens and Anti-Tobacco Messages: Examining Reactance in Trial Users”
James D. Mason, Oklahoma State University, USA
Marlys J. Mason, Oklahoma State University, USA

Social marketing is intended to make a positive difference in the health and well-being of people’s lives. However, some scholars have voiced concerns about possible unintended consequences that may result from social marketing campaigns (Pechmann and Slater 2005; Ringold 2002). They suggest that some campaigns may trigger reactance and lead to defensive biases and/or boomerang effects within some segments.

Reactance theory (Brehm 1966) argues that when people perceive a restriction to their freedom they evaluate (consciously or unconsciously) its fairness. If the result of this evaluation is negative (ie: unfair) then a reactance state may be triggered and the person will take steps to remove this undesired state. In general, this means that the individual makes an attempt to undermine the perceived restriction through psychological or behavioral means. Adolescents are particularly prone to reactance because they have heightened sensitivity to potential threats to their developing sense of autonomy.

A wide range of anti-tobacco prevention messages have been targeted toward teens (Pechmann et al. 2003). Given the diverse nature of the themes and presentational tones that are used, some anti-tobacco messages may be more likely to trigger reactance, particularly for segments who are in the early stages of experimenting with smoking. For example, social-themed messages that marginalize youth smokers by portraying them as unpopular, stupid, social outcasts, or other degrading or unflattering characterizations may trigger reactance. Health messages that present in-your-face graphic depictions of diseased organs, body bags, etc. may constitute tacit threats to those in trial stages and trigger reactance or defense responses.

The purpose of this research is to investigate the impact and possible unintended consequences of various anti-tobacco advertisement campaigns targeted toward teens. Specifically, we examine the possible reactance and defense mechanisms that result in response to different anti-tobacco campaign themes (health, industry manipulation, and social norm) and presentation tones (hard-hitting and humor) upon two teen segments (prior trial and non-trial groups). This study used data collected from an 3 x 2 x 2 between subjects experiment conducted on over 550 14 and 15 year-old teens in schools from three different communities in the Midwestern United States.

Our analysis (ANOVAs) suggests that some anti-tobacco campaigns trigger reactance and defense biases in teens who have experimented with tobacco. First, main effects reveal that non-smokers and smokers in the trial stage differ significantly in their attitudes toward ads throughout the study. Second, several interaction effects revealed differences in attitudes toward smoking, smoking intentions, attitudes toward ads, perceived social acceptability of smoking, and various reactance responses. We discuss the implications of this study for policymakers as well as for future research in the area.
SESSION SUMMARY
A significant amount of research is beginning to accumulate that investigates the effects of psycholinguistic factors on various aspects of marketing communication (Lowrey 2007). Examples of these factors include phonetic symbolism (effects of sound on meaning), polysemy (multiple meanings), and metaphor, just to name a few. Linguistic theory has also been usefully applied to translations and dual language processing in the context of brand names and marketing communications (Carroll, Luna, and Peracchio 2007; Zhang and Schmitt 2007).

Although attention to the topic of psycholinguistics is indeed increasing, it is nevertheless a fairly recent phenomena, and hence the topic of this special session. In this session, we look specifically at how linguistic factors can impact brand and brand name evaluations.

The first paper, by Jennifer J. Argo, Monica Popa, and Malcolm C. Smith (“Harmony’s Affective Impact on Brand Evaluations”), looks at the affective outcomes when “harmony” between linguistic components of a brand name and auditory stimulation occurs. Across three experiments, Argo et al. show that brand name evaluations are more positive when brand names contain schemes of sound than when they do not, but that this effect is greater under auditory (reading names out loud) than under visual (reading names silently). They also show that these effects transfer from simple evaluations of brand names to evaluations of the brands themselves, even after product usage (tasting ice cream), and are stronger for those with a greater “ear for harmony” compared to those with a lesser ear for harmony.

The second paper, by L. J. Shrum and Tina M. Lowrey (“Effects of Articulatory Suppression on Phonetic Symbolism Effects on Brand Name Preference”), extends previous work on phonetic symbolism effects. That research has shown that sounds of words (e.g., those made via back vs. front vowels) influence preferences for brand names. Brand names for which the attributes suggested by the sound are congruent with the attributes of the product (e.g., brand names whose sounds suggesting small and fast are liked better as names for a two-seater convertibles than as names for an SUV) Shrum and Lowrey investigate a possible boundary condition of this effect by looking at how the extent to which phonetic information enters the phonological memory store influences phonetic symbolism effects. Models of memory (e.g., Baddeley, 1986) indicate that in order for sound to have effects from words that are read, the sound representation of the word must be transferred to the “phonological memory store” in the brain. Research has shown that this effect is automatic for heard sounds but not for sounds that are associated with read words. Thus, the transfer of information into the phonological store can be interrupted through “articulatory suppression,” that is, suppressing the articulation of the read word. Shrum and Lowrey present evidence that when information is able to enter the phonological store (e.g., simply reading a word silently), phonetic symbolism results obtain. However, when the transfer of the phonetic information is blocked through an articulatory suppression manipulation, phonetic symbolism effects are eliminated.

Taken as a whole, the session provides a very focused look at the effects of linguistic factors on brand name perceptions. The findings have important implications for brand-naming strategies and should be of interest to consumer researchers working in the theoretical areas (memory, information processing) as well as the marketing domain areas (e.g., brand names).

ABSTRACTS

“Harmony’s Affective Impact on Brand Evaluations”
Jennifer J. Argo, University of Alberta
Monica Popa, University of Alberta
Malcolm C. Smith, University of Manitoba

There has been a significant increase in the rate of growth of brand names being introduced to the marketplace. For example, in 1999 over 290,000 applications for trademarks were submitted in the United States, almost double the number introduced five years earlier (PTO Today 2000). Given that brand names are capable of enhancing awareness and creating favorable impressions for a product (Aaker and Keller 1990; Keller 1998), and that some product failures have been attributed to ineffective brand names (e.g., Ford Edsel; Hartley 1992; Klink 2000), it is not surprising that companies spend millions of dollars in naming and maintaining their brands.

Recently, marketing researchers have begun to explore a variety of strategies that companies may use to create effective brand names. Some naming strategies produce brand names that explicitly convey information about the product (e.g., Lowrey, Shrum, and Dubitsky 2003). Other naming strategies may result in names that are not as obviously connected to the product’s features. One example would be the use of sound symbolism which focuses on the linguistic structure of brand names and its impact on consumer perceptions (e.g., Brendl et al. 2005; Klink 2000, 2001; Yorkston and Mello 2005). While research has demonstrated that linguistic characteristics of brand names can cognitively impact product evaluations (e.g., Lowrey and Shrum 2008; Yorkston and Menon 2004), in the present research, we suggest that affect may also be influential. Furthermore, we propose that affect may arise on exposure to a brand name due to the harmony (i.e., the enjoyment that arises from a word or groups of words due to their sound, rhythm, and/or rhyme; Ferguson 1961).

Across three experiments we test the proposition that harmony elicits positive affect which in turn favorably impacts consumers’ evaluations of brands. To achieve this, we test whether evaluations are influenced by two factors believed to be fundamental to creating harmony during brand exposure: the linguistic structure of the brand name evaluated (i.e., the name either contains a rhetorical scheme or not) and the sense that is stimulated (i.e., visual or auditory). Overall we predict that consumers will evaluate a brand more favorably when it is comprised of a rhetorical scheme of sound and the stimulated sense is auditory. Moreover, we identify a condition under which harmony exists objectively but does not influence affect or evaluations, by measuring consumers’ individual differences in responsiveness to harmony (i.e., the extent to which they have an “ear for harmony”).

Study 1’s objective was to test our prediction using brand names currently available in the marketplace. The brand either contained a linguistic scheme of sound or was neutral. The study instructions were used to achieve the stimulated sense manipulation. Those participants in the auditory condition were asked to read...
the brand names that appeared in an experimental booklet out loud while those participants in the visual condition were instructed to read the brand names to themselves. In total, participants evaluated eight different brands (one with a figurative element and one without) from four different product categories. After exposure to each brand name, participants indicated the extent to which they liked the brand name. Results revealed that brand name evaluations were higher when the linguistic structure of a brand name included figurative elements (i.e., schemes of sound) as compared to when these elements were absent (i.e., neutral). More importantly, these brands received the highest overall evaluations when the auditory sense was stimulated but did not differ when the brand had a neutral linguistic structure and/or the stimulated sense was visual.

Study 2 aimed to provide a more controlled investigation of the impact of harmonic elements on product evaluations through the creation of two different pairs of brand names (that were matched on length and sound characteristics). One brand name in each pair contained an element of figurative language whereas the other brand name did not (i.e., was neutral). Participants were provided with a sample of two purportedly different brands (one brand had a figurative element while the second did not) of ice cream to evaluate. 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, taste it, and then repeat the process for the second sample. Unknown to participants, the samples were from the same container of ice cream. After tasting both ice samples, participants evaluated the brand and indicated their 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 compared to the other conditions. Finally, mediation analysis provided support for the notion that the effects on brand evaluations were driven by consumers’ positive affect.

Study 3 explored whether the individual difference – responsiveness to harmony – moderated our results. We expected that product evaluations would be higher for those participants high in responsiveness to harmony (since they are easily impacted by harmonic elements) when a brand name is comprised of a rhetorical scheme of sound and the stimulated sense is auditory versus when the brand has a neutral linguistic structure and/or the stimulated sense is visual; differences in evaluations for a product were expected to be attenuated for participants low in responsiveness to harmony. To explore this, study 3 used the same procedure as study 2 except that after evaluating the brands, responsiveness to harmony was measured using the Primary Measures of Music Audition Test (PMMAT). Overall, the results of the analysis were consistent with our predictions. In summary, the present research explores and tests the possibility that exposure to brand names when harmony is created will positively impact consumers’ affect and in turn favorably influence evaluations.

“Effects of Articulatory Suppression on Phonetic Symbolism Effects on Brand Name Preference”
L. J. Shrum, University of Texas at San Antonio
Tina M. Lowrey, University of Texas at San Antonio

Phonetic symbolism refers to a non-arbitrary relation between sound and meaning. It suggests that the mere sound of a word, apart from its actual definition, conveys meaning. These sounds derive from phonemes, which are the smallest units of sound (e.g., the sound of the letter p). Whether sounds are systematically related to certain meanings or their relation is arbitrary has been debated at least since 400 B.C. In Plato’s dialogue, Cratylus (Plato 1892), Hermogenes and Socrates discuss this very issue. Hermogenes takes the position that the relation is arbitrary, but Socrates disagrees. Socrates concedes that across all words, the relation may sometimes be arbitrary, but that good words are ones in which their sound and meaning are congruent (see also Fitch 1994; Klink 2000). This debate can also be seen in the works of Ferdinand de Saussure (1916), who argues that the relation is arbitrary, and Otto Jespersen (1922), who argues for a systematic relation.

Research on phonetic symbolism has a long history (for a review, see Shrum and Lowrey 2007). Recently, research in marketing and consumer behavior has begun to investigate the implications of phonetic symbolism for brand name perceptions (Lowrey and Shrum 2007; Yorkston and Menon 2004). That research has shown that sounds of words (e.g., those made via back vs. front vowels) influence preferences for brand names. Brand names for which the attributes suggested by the sound are congruent with the attributes of the product (e.g., brand names whose sounds suggesting small and fast are liked better as names for a two-seater convertibles than as names for an SUV).

In this paper, we present the results of a study intended to better understand how these effects occur cognitively. Models of memory (e.g., Baddeley, 1986) indicate that in order for sound to have effects from words that are read, the sound representation of the word must be transferred to the “phonological memory store” in the brain. Research has shown that this effect is automatic for heard sounds but not for sounds that are associated with read words. Thus, the transfer of information into the phonological store can be interrupted through “articulatory suppression,” that is, suppressing the articulation of the read word.

We tested this possibility by manipulating whether information was allowed to enter the phonological memory store. We found that when information was allowed to enter the phonological store (e.g., when participants simply read the word silently), the general phonetic symbolism results obtain: participants preferred words as brand names when the concepts connoted by the dominant vowel sound of those words (e.g., fast, small) were consistent with the attributes of the product category (e.g., two-seater convertible) than when they were not (e.g., SUV). In contrast, when transfer of phonetic information into the phonological store was inhibited through an articulatory suppression manipulation (having participants count out loud while reading the brand name), the effects of phonetic symbolism were eliminated.
Product Relationships, Brand Meanings, and Symbolism for Mainstream Brands: the Case of the Sports Bike Community
Reto Felix, University of Monterrey, Mexico

ABSTRACT
Previous research on brand relationships has emphasized intense relationships between consumers and celebrated or even worshipped brands, for example in the form of brand communities or brand-related subcultures of consumption. This research focuses on the relationships consumers build with mainstream brands. Netnography was used to explore product relationships, brand meanings, and symbolism of the sport bike rider subculture. The results suggest high levels of personification and product involvement, but low levels of brand commitment and loyalty. The findings are embedded into a framework for theory building, and implications for marketing practice are discussed.

INTRODUCTION
Previous research on online and offline brand communities or subcultures of consumption have described the intense relationships that evolve between consumers and their brands. For example, Muñiz and Schau (2005, Schau and Muñiz 2006) explored religious-like relationships consumers had with the Apple Newton, Leigh, Peters, and Shelton (2006) investigated brand authenticity in the MG subculture of consumption, and Schouten and McAlexander (1995) delved into structures and core values of Harley Davidson motorcycle riders and their relationship with the Harley Davidson brand. The brands depicted in these studies have in common a clear and unique positioning which is strong enough to make consumers identify heavily with the brand. For these consumers, brands from competitors do not form part of their consideration set, and brands are clearly classified into “our brands” and “other brands” by the community or subculture of consumption.

Typically, as in the case of the Apple Newton, MG, and Harley Davidson, these brands are not produced for the masses, and they are usually not market leaders in their category. However, many other brands have not been able to reach such a unique (and indisputably desirable) position in consumers’ minds and hearts, and most of them probably never will. Do the same rules for these mainstream brands apply as for the brands celebrated and worshipped in brand communities and subcultures of consumption? How is the own brand perceived, in comparison with competing brands? Are there more open, liberal relationships instead of the closed, authoritarian relationships? Are there more open, liberal relationships instead of the closed, authoritarian relationships?

Motorbikes were selected as the product category and a Japanese sports bike model chosen as the specific research context of this study. Netnography was used to explore product relationships, brand meanings, and symbolism of the sport bike rider subculture. Netnography has been defined as “ethnography adapted to the study of online communities” (Kozinets 2002, 61) and has been used in consumption contexts such as the X-Files (Kozinets 1997), Star Trek (Kozinets 2001, 2006), wedding messages (Nelson and Ottes 2005), or consumer gift systems (Giesler 2006). Similar to traditional ethnography, netnography is open-ended, interpretative, flexible, metaphorical, and grounded in the knowledge of the specific and particularistic (Kozinets 2002, Jupp 2006). However, netnography is usually faster, simpler, and less expensive than traditional ethnography (Kozinets 2002, 2006). As with traditional ethnography, the netnographic researcher may determine the degree of active participation and interaction with informants within her research. However, whereas the traditional ethnographer typically accompanies informants and thus has to reveal her presence, the netnographic researcher may choose to collect data from online communities (e.g., postings from a bulletin board) in a completely unobtrusive way, if desired. Although established rules of research ethics apply to netnography as well (e.g., asking informants for permission to use direct quotations obtained from bulletin boards), the researcher is able to obtain data that have been generated previously and for a different purpose, and are thus free of contamination from the researchers’ presence or participation.

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection
Several Internet forums were investigated for this research, and the Yamaha R1 forum (www.r1-forum.com) was chosen as primary data source. Although its name suggests a limitation to Yamaha’s top-of-the-range sport bike, the Yamaha R1, there are also members subscribed to the forum who either have motorbikes from different brands, such as Honda, Suzuki, Kawasaki, or Ducati, or who are aspirational (i.e., who currently do not have a sport motorbike but would like to have one in the future). The main reason for choosing the R1 forum was its size, with 72,721 subscribed members as of June 29, 2007, and more than 2,800,000 postings in approximately 191,000 threads. Threads in the R1 forum are grouped into five different sections: Community, R1-related discussion, technique, racing & stunt discussion, marketplace, and misc. In the period between August, 2006, and July, 2007, several thousand postings were read and a total of 108 were downloaded for a more detailed examination. Many postings were not downloaded because they treated, e.g., technical issues (how to fix a specific problem with the bike or where to get the best price for accessories and parts) and thus were not relevant to the research topic of interest.

Downloading postings followed an iterative approach, in the sense that postings were downloaded as long as analysis of these postings generated new insights instead of leading to redundancy (Belk, Sherry, and Wallendorf 1988). This approach may also be described as theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss 1967) or purposive sampling (Lincoln and Guba 1985, Lohr 1999, Wallendorf and Belk 1989). Because data analysis and interpretation are iterative, a possible danger for researchers is to generate preliminary patterns or explanations and then fall victim to selective information processing by giving (unintentionally or unconsciously) more weight to postings that confirm these patterns or explanations (confirmation bias). The existence of a confirmation bias has been shown by several authors in the context of hypothesis testing (compare for an overview Zuckerman et al. 1995), and it may be argued that the confirmation bias also may occur in ethnographic research contexts. In order to avoid this pitfall, disconfirmative data was sought actively via the forum’s internal search engine, and conclusions were only drawn when no disconfirmative data could be found.

Besides forum postings as the primary data source, other information sources included information from motorbike related web pages, articles in magazines, participant observation at a local sport bike motorcycle club, and personal contact with the product category. These additional information sources also served for data triangulation in the subsequent steps of the research.
Organization and Analysis
The 108 downloaded postings were pre-classified into different categories and examined for recurrences in the data. Recurrences were organized using codes, where one statement could be assigned one or several codes. Because sampling of the postings did follow a purposeful or theoretical, as opposed to a statistical, sampling approach, it was not the absolute number of occurrences that qualified a specific aspect of a statement for coding, but the researcher’s judgment that the occurrence was typical, meaningful, or relevant for the consumption community. Comparisons (called troping) were then made among codes and between codes and currently uncoded statements, in order to “thicken” codes into more meaningful constructs and finally into interpretive layers of themes. It is this process of coding and troping that allows researchers to develop “layers of meaning comprising an interpretation” and to obtain outcomes that “ethnographers refer to as a richly textured interpretation” (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994, 498, 499).

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

Language
As in Kozinet’s (2002) netnography of the <alt.coffee> newsgroup, members of the R1 forum speak their own language that may be bemusing or simply incomprehensible for the unfamiliar. Product related language includes knowledge about different motorbike models, accessories, and their main characteristics, and reflects important aspects of individuality, status, or risk-taking behaviors. For example, a list of accessories at the end of a posting including items such as “Akrapovic carbon fiber full race exhaust, PCIII USB, Öhlins steering damper, fender eliminator with LEDs” may suggest a proneness for individuality, but it also may signal expertise to other riders and enhance acceptance and status of a forum’s member. A second group of language is related to riding the motorcycle in general. For example, an expression such as “highsider” (a motorcycle accident caused by the rear wheel gaining traction after it has lost traction, frequently resulting in the rider to be thrown off the bike) provokes associations and feelings that only the “initiated” may fully comprehend.

Personification and Conflict
Many contributors in the R1 forum emphasize that the R1 needs a lot of respect, in order to avoid accidents. Riding a sport bike is like being in a dangerous environment, it “deserves a lot of respect. Like the ocean, if you don’t respect it you could end up crushed!” Forum members also warn that the inexperienced rider may get “punished by the bike,” and that the bike “is not forgiving in any manner.” Accidents or close accidents may come in a sudden, unexpected way. The rider may feel comfortable on the bike, and the very next moment, the “beast will hit you.” The motorcycle thus is frequently described not as a material thing, but rather as a wild animal that has its own will and behavior. Like the animal tamer in the circus has to show respect to the predator and avoid the temptation of feeling safe, the sport bike rider has to do the same with the bike. As in the circus, overconfidence or moments of inadvertency may lead to fatal accidents. However, the beast can be tamed, and whereas a profound knowledge about the lion or tiger in the circus may protect the animal tamer from aggressive behavior of the animal, it is self-control and, more specifically, throttle control that may protect the R1 rider from unwanted reactions of the bike. It is this tension between the emotional, the fear, and the unpredictable, versus the rational and control, which are finally integrated and lead to the domination of the beast.

As with other important activities, riding a motorcycle can interfere significantly with the maintenance of social relationships, although one might think that riding a motorcycle is an expression of masculinity and thus may make the rider more attractive for women, the opposite is often the truth. Consider, e.g., Ron who describes how he gave up riding, but then started again:

If you look under my avatar, you’ll see that I sold my R6. My mom hated the idea of me riding. My girlfriend would call when she knew I had planned to go riding and if I didn’t call back in a short amount of time, she’d be crying. (Passed her on one wheel one day and kind of freaked her out. One car on the whole damn stretch of road and it was her...WTF?) Anyways, I sold my R6 in August of ’05. By March of this year, I almost lost my mind so I bought an R1. Mom still doesn’t like it, girlfriend still HATES it, I still love it. They’ll either get over it or they won’t, either way, riding is one of the few things that make me happy and there’s no way in hell I would ever give that up again.

In the case of Ron, it was the fear of a serious accident that made his mother and girlfriend disapprove his activity. The addictive aspect of riding a motorcycle is also expressed in this posting, as Ron explains that he “almost lost his mind” after he had sold his bike. Turning points such as quitting motorcycle riding have been described by Haigh and Crowther (2005) and also include, e.g., the first time a rider participates in a track day, the first accident, or the first time a rider does a wheelie. Ron’s craving for riding a motorcycle was so strong that eventually he bought a new (and even more powerful) motorbike. For Ron, the activity is so important that he even accepts the (fear-based) disapproval of his mother and his girlfriend. However, the fear of an accident is only one of at least two possible explanations why the girlfriend or spouse doesn’t like the idea of riding a motorcycle. In some cases, the bike may create conflict by absorbing important resources, such as time or devotion, and there are in fact motorcycle owners who refer to their bike as “hers” instead of “it,” as in the following postings by James and Robert:

Well I finally went down. Firstly I’m healthy. I was wearing full gear and I only have some bumps and bruises so it’s all good. Smacked my head on the ground so I was dazed for about a half hour or so but my Shoei definitely protected my nugget! Now on to my girl...she’s banged up but repairable. Broke the upper and stay but didn’t break the headlights...that’s a money saver! My right clip-on hit the dust as well as my new Pazzo brake lever. Right side rearset is busted but that’s easily fixed. The frame and clutch sliders did there job to a T. I’ve got some rash on my mids and on my rear tail section but nothing completely destroyed other than my upper and stay. No fluids leaking or anything so I’m good. The forks and frame look great, all things considered. [James]

Ok me and the wife split up and one of the first things that I did was park my other women in my house and I bought a pool table! She came over today and flipped out!!!! lol. [Robert]

Both James and Robert do not only attribute personality to their bikes, but explicitly refer to their bikes as females. The competing role between partner and motorcycle is especially salient in Robert’s posting, who refers to his motorcycle as his “other women” when deciding to park it in the living room. In order to signal his regained freedom to the forum members, Robert uploads pictures of his newly decorated living room, showing the pool table in the middle of the room and the motorbike on a rear stand on one side, next to his leather suit which is carefully attached to a coat.
hook on the wall. Thus, Robert’s wife is not running against some abstract activity or thing, but rather against another female competitor, which may explain her strong reaction when visiting Robert in his newly decorated home. However, James and Robert’s postings also exemplify the decision conflict many forum members express when sharing their thoughts and experiences about riding a motorcycle. For many members, there is a continuing conflict between the bike on one hand and the girlfriend or family on the other hand, between fun and risk, and between the emotional and the rational. Almost as in Freud’s structure of the personality, the id is represented by the motorbike which is moving the person to obtain positive feelings and emotions, whereas the ego, represented by girlfriend, family, the police, and the social environment in general, pressures the motorbike owner to be practical, reasonable, and responsible.

Brand Commitment and Brand Segregation

Harley-Davidson riders, as described by Schouten and McAlexander (1995), as well as many virtual communities united by their affection for brands such as the Apple Newton (Muniz and Schau 2005, Schau and Muniz 2006), Hummer (Luedicke 2006), MG (Leigh, Peters, and Shelton 2006), McIntosh (Belk and Tumbat 2005, Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001), Nutella (Cova and Pace 2006), and Saab (Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001) define themselves by their commitment to one specific brand. High levels of brand identification often come along with almost unconditioned adoration and loyalty for the brand that may even turn into quasi-religious forms of worship. There is always a very clear demarcation between the “own” brand and the “other” brands, which leads to a voluntary brand segregation for community members. However, what sounds as good news for some brands is not necessarily a reality for other brands. In the example of the Yamaha R1 community, it becomes quickly apparent that brand identification and loyalty are on much lower levels than for many of the Harley-Davidson customers. For example, quite a number of Yamaha R1 owners, although often very satisfied with their bike, readily state that they would buy the bike that gives them the best performance or value, independently of the brand, as the following example shows:

I’m really faithful to Yamaha, but when sitting on a new R1 and a new GSX-R1000 side by side, I have to say I like the Suzuki. The R1 just feels so much... bigger. I don’t know. Also, the magazines bitch about the suspension... yet how many serious track people leave suspension stock anyway? Regardless, I’m too poor to buy a new bike, so I’ll continue riding my 02 R1 on the track.

In the above statement, John emphasizes his loyalty to his current bike, a 2002 Yamaha R1, but this loyalty seems not to be unconditioned, as in many of the examples from brand communities. Rather, the decision to stay with his current bike is based on economic reasons (high switching costs), as opposed to arguments related to brand loyalty or the superiority of his current brand. Interestingly, he is not considering a more recent Yamaha model when reflecting about his own bike, but seems to prefer the new Suzuki 1000. The reason for this conditioned or limited brand loyalty may lie in the tight competition between the established brands sport bike producers, accompanied by little differentiated products and brands. Established brands in the sport bike category, such as Honda, Suzuki, or Kawasaki, seem to be almost perfect substitutes for the Yamaha brand. For example, when a relatively new forum member asked what brand he should buy, respondents stated that although they were very satisfied with their Yamaha’s, he should buy the bike he simply liked best, because “any of the new bikes are great” (Daniel). Or, as Joe puts it,

“I’ve spent some time on all the bikes and seriously there is no true winner, no matter what you get nowadays is a rocket out of the crate and you will be getting a good bike! Each has its ups and down but overall I could see myself on any of them really!”

Because no American brand currently offers a sport bike (the only remaining U.S. motorcycle manufacturer of importance, Harley-Davidson, does not offer motorcycles in the sport bike category), values such as patriotism or American heritage (Schouten and McAlexander 1995) do not appear in the R1 forum. Rather, the American heritage of Harley riders is frequently questioned by remarks such as David’s who observes “You know what I think is funny: They tell us we’re riding Jap bikes but you look in there driveway and you see a Honda, Toyota, or a Subaru parked there.” Although the forum members seem to be relatively open to any motorcycle rider, independently of brand, Harley-Davidson riders are seen differently by some members because they are perceived by these members as a mostly arrogant and closed community. Forum members, e.g., complain that Harley riders do not care for other motorists on the street, as suggested in the following posting:

After last week’s trip to the convention, I have a new-found hatred for Harley riders. It’s not so much that they can’t ride worth a shit, it’s also the fact that they could give a shit less about everyone else on the road, especially sportbikes. I give them a short opportunity to get the hell over, then if they don’t it’s a quick change to Pro-Racer mode. I’ve noticed that they tend to get over when you pass them like you mean business. No more waves from me after last week.

The consequence (which may be interpreted almost as a punishment for the Harley riders) is that Jack does not wave any more to them. Waving is an important form of greeting between motorcyclists, and for many bikers it is an important ritual that distinguishes them from car drivers and other motorists. However, waving also describes the relationships and hierarchies within the motorcycle community. First, members of relatively closed communities such as the Harley-Davidson subculture may not wave at everyone, and even may decide to only wave at other Harley-Davidson riders (or, in its extreme form, only at riders that appear to be “hardcore” riders). Second, it is commonly expected for riders of smaller motorbikes to wave first. In any case, riders of the larger sport bikes (namely, 600cc, 750cc or literbikes) do not necessarily wave back at smaller bikes. However, there are apparently no conventions or norms in the community for this behavior, and whereas some R1 owners do not wave at everyone, others state they do:

Myself, I will wave at anyone on 2 wheels, (except scooters, can’t standem). If you wave back, cool, if you don’t...whatever. And normally will not disrespect others on bikes until they do so. I may not own or ride a Harley or a chopper or an Indian, but I do still appreciate them for their looks and styling. (Andrew)

The existence of a complex social structure of the Harley-Davidson subculture with its multiple, coexisting subgroups, as described by Schouten and McAlexander (1995), is implicitly confirmed in this research by the very different approaches of sport bike riders on how to treat Harley riders.
Summary

The findings of this research suggest that for many forum members, their motorcycle is more than just a machine. Traits and qualities of living beings are assigned frequently to the bike, and the metaphors of “the beast” or “my other woman” are used. In contrast to the Harley Davidson subculture of consumption described by Schouten and McAlexander (1995), the conflicts of driving a motorcycle become salient in the postings of the forum members. These conflicts can be internal, e.g. the conflict between the hedonistic search for emotions and fun versus the fear of having an accident, or external, e.g., the conflict between allocating time and devotion to the girlfriend or wife versus the bike (the other woman). Despite these high levels of personification, the sports bike community seems to be inherently open to other brands. For example, the sport bike community seems to be relatively open when it comes to waving at other riders, and the feeling of unity is, in contrast to brand communities, not expressed by the brand, but rather by the activity. This may explain why Harley-Davidson riders, who seem to be more brand oriented, are perceived as arrogant by some sport bike riders, with the consequence that these two groups frequently do not wave at each other. The openness of the sport bike community to other brands further becomes salient when R1 owners give advice about which motorcycle to buy. Although R1 owners frequently express very high levels of satisfaction with their bike, they do not discard other motorcycle brands, such as Honda, Suzuki, or Kawasaki, from their consideration set. Many of them feel committed and loyal to the Yamaha brand; however, this loyalty is not as unconditional as in the case of the Harley-Davidson owners described by Schouten and McAlexander (1995).

LINKING MARKET ANALYSIS WITH MARKETING STRATEGY

It is an objective of most, if not all, marketing managers to build strong brands and to generate loyal and committed customers who do not only repurchase the product, but highly identify themselves with the brand and recommend it to other potential users. Some manufacturers have been successful in obtaining these high levels of brand identification and creating brand communities who are enthusiastic about their brands. Other producers of consumer products are faced with customers who are, despite of being satisfied, less loyal and more readily willing to switch brands. This research suggests that the sport bike community belongs in large part to the latter group. For example, whereas it has been suggested that loyal customers are more likely to recommend a company or brand to a friend or colleague (Reichheld 2006), members in the R1 forum do not endorse the Yamaha brand enthusiastically, but rather recommend “newbies” to buy the bike that provides the best fit or the highest performance, independently of the brand. Further, sport bike riders generally do not discriminate between their own and other brands when waving at other bikers, whereas for a truly brand loyal motorcycle owner, one would expect a higher likelihood to wave at bikes from the same brand than to wave at bikes from a different manufacturer. Thus, the important distinction between “my brand” and “the other brands” seems to be weak in the sport bike community, and in contrast to the Harley Davidson subculture of consumption, true, symbiotic brand relationships between manufacturers and sport bike owners have not been developed yet.

Although brand commitment in the sport bike community seems to be low, the findings of this research also suggest that product involvement or involvement for the activity is high. Figure 1 opens a two-dimensional space resulting in four quadrants, with involvement for the activity on the vertical axis, and brand commitment on the horizontal axis. Quadrant I consists of savvy loyal consumers who show not only a strong involvement for the activity, but also a strong brand commitment. Many brand communities, as well as the Harley-Davidson subculture of consumption as described by Schouten and McAlexander, belong to this segment. Quadrant II consists of educated switchers. These are consumers with high involvement for the activity, but low brand commitment. When repurchasing a product within the same category, e.g., a new motorbike, their decision making (i.e., information search, alternative evaluation, choice, and postpurchase evaluation) is extensive, and their choice set for a repurchase is typically larger than that of the savvy loyal. The convinced uninvolved segment in quadrant III is composed of consumers who have a strong brand commitment, but are not very involved with the product or the activity. It is probable that the high brand commitment expressed by these consumers is the result of influences from marketing activities or social groups such as friends or family. Examples in this consumer group are Harley-Davidson aspirants or “wanna-bes” as described by Schouten and McAlexander (1995), or “squids” in the R1 forum. Squids are mostly young, inexperienced riders with an emphasis on power and masculinity. According to several forum postings, they are ignorant about motorcycles but pretend to know a lot in discussions with experts and insist on their opinion, even when all evidence proves them wrong. Summarizing several comments on the topic by forum members, a typical squid buys the newest and most powerful motorcycle in the market just to show off, but then very quickly experiences a severe accident which is aggravated by the fact that squids typically drive in shorts and T-shirt, instead of using the recommended motorcycle gear. Finally, quadrant IV consists of persons with a relatively low involvement for the activity and low brand commitment. Although this segment is currently not very interested in motorcycles, marketers should not completely neglect it, because some of its members may be converted into convinced uninvolved (quadrant III), educated switchers (quadrant II), or even savvy loyal (quadrant I).

As in most other forums, the R1 forum allows visitors to read postings without being registered, and the forum statistics suggest that at any given time, there are more visitors on the forum’s page than registered members. It is probable that many of the forum members are opinion leaders for less experienced riders or aspirants. The opportunities for brand socialization are significant in this context, because similar to McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig’s (2002) research on Jeep owners, new motorcycle riders may benefit from the expertise and social approval of veterans, whereas veterans benefit from the status and respect received in the community. Thus, one of the foremost priorities for marketing managers should be to increase brand commitment within the registered members of the forum. However, how can forum members be converted from educated switchers to savvy loyal? Evidence from Galfer, a provider of motorcycle braking systems, suggests that the R1 community is very receptive to the presence of representatives from companies, as long as their postings are not directly aimed at selling their products. Sergio Garcia, a Galfer employee, invites R1 forum members to ask him brake related questions with the following posting:

I work for a brake manufacturer, but I am not here to sell you on what I have. I am here to educate on brakes in general. If you have a questions, problems or concerns, let me hear it. I will do my best to give you a non-bias answer and help out my fellow riders. So bring them on! I have already answered a ton of brake related posts throughout this forum, but I am here if you need more info.
By choosing an unobtrusive, non-selling approach in the R1 forum, the company manages to gain credibility in the community and to build customer relationships that are more consumer focused and authentic than many of the hard-selling approaches at the dealerships. The Galfer thread on brake questions has more than 600 postings, which is significantly above the forum’s average of around 15 postings per thread, and evidences the interest of the community in a direct contact with company representatives. The Galfer example also suggests that online or brand communities are not limited to relationships between consumers and the brand and between consumers and consumers. Rather, consumers develop complex relationships with several brands, products, marketing agents, and other consumers within the same community.

Communication in Internet forums are thus not outside the control of marketers, but rather provide marketers with the opportunity to monitor and understand customers' problems and concerns, and potentially influence their beliefs, attitudes, and opinions. Marketers of parts, accessories, and services can opt to show presence where their customers are. For example, a braking system manufacturer like Galfer may decide to be in several forums about different Yamaha, Honda, Kawasaki, Suzuki, or Ducati models, as well as in more specialized forums about motorcycle brakes. However, the forum’s openness to other brands also provides opportunities for direct competitors. For example, company representatives from Honda or Kawasaki may try to not only monitor the activities on the R1 forum, but actively engage in discussions with R1 owners. On the other hand, marketers from Yamaha may try to not only show presence at forums related to Yamaha models, but also be in forums that focus on competing Honda, Kawasaki, Suzuki, or Ducati motorbikes. As such, many online forums are essentially consumer, not brand centered.

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Global or Local? Consumers’ Perception of Global Brands in Latin America
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ABSTRACT

Even though the debate between global vs. local brand has been intense and well-documented, there are still some important pending questions regarding the specific impact of perceived globalness on each of the sources of brand equity. This study aims at understanding how global brands are in a distinct position to affect loyalty drivers. The analysis is set in three major markets of Latin America, evidencing important attitude and behavioral differences among the consumers in these markets. Results show that consumers prefer global brands to local alternatives in some of the main loyalty drivers, but not in all of them.

Introduction

Both scholars and practitioners agree the current trend towards globalization is real and accelerating. Consistent with this trend, many companies have changed their strategy from a multi-domestic marketing approach to a focus on global brands. Even though the globalization imperative has been present for more than twenty years (after Levitt’s seminal article in 1983), not many brands can be called truly global. Additionally, in most of brand value rankings published by research agencies at the national level, the top positions feature a mixture of global and local brands.

The phenomenon of globalization is explained by several factors, including the expansion of global media, critical advances in telecommunications (Internet being its best representative), increased feasibility in foreign travel and international investments. All these forces have promoted an increased similarity in lifestyles across the world, taking to the emergence of a “global consumer culture” (Alden et al, 1999). On the contrary, other scholars argue that local cultures are still a very powerful force shaping consumers’ preferences and still others identify a tendency in consumers to “hybridize” (Holton, 2000), “glocalize” (Ritzer, 2003) or “creolize” as a way to blend global and indigenous cultural forces.

Definition of Global brands

There are not formal definitions in the scholarly literature of global brands, but previous studies have defined global as the multi-market reach of products that are perceived as the same brands worldwide by consumers (Johansson and Ronkainen, 2005). As for practitioners, the ACNielsen 2001 study of global brands provided a clear definition considering a brand as global if present in the four major regions of the world, with at least 5 per cent of sales coming from outside the home regions and total revenues of at least $1 billion. According to this definition, the study could identify only 43 brands in the consumer packaged goods industry. From the customer prospective, a brand is perceived to be marketed in multiple countries and is recognized as global. That perception can be derived from two sources: 1) corporate marketing communications normally associated with a modern urban lifestyle (Alden et al, 1999); 2) external-based communications such as media exposure, word of mouth or consumers’ own traveling.

There are important advantages derived from the consumption of global brands, because they are perceived to be more value-added for the consumer, either through better quality (as a function of worldwide acceptance) or by enhancing the consumer’s self-perception as being cosmopolitan, sophisticated and modern. Still, in many places, notably Europe, Latin America, and South East Asia, local brands still do well in many fast-moving consumer goods categories. The justification is based on the enhanced ability of these brands to satisfy local needs, hence retaining their local strengths. The global brands that have been dramatically successful mainly stem from the United States of America, Japan or selected European countries and some authors argue that these brands only “work” because of marketing resources as trade backing from international retailers and massive advertising budgets behind them. However, they may lack the connection to consumers that can sustain a long-term relationship between the consumer and the brand.

Much of the research analyzing these contrasting forces has been focused on the comparison of Western Societies (specially North America) and Asian countries (Alden et al, 1999, Batra et al, 2000, Alden et al, 2006). However, there is a paucity of research focusing on Latin American consumers. Moreover, most observers tend to assume that Latin America is culturally homogeneous and there is an outstanding similarity that consumers display in their consumption habits and preferences, making these countries the ideal setting for an standardized marketing approach.

The purpose of this study is threefold: (1) To empirically test the impact of global brands on loyalty drivers; (2) To analyze possible differences among consumers in the three major markets (in terms of volume) in Latin America; (3) To examine the implications for marketers

The Value of Global Brands for Consumers

Brands play a critical role for consumers in terms of communication and identification. Brands offer a compass to guide them through a purchasing environment typified by too much information. The brand is seen by most consumers as a sign of quality, assisting them to make their purchasing decisions. A brand can also serve as a social business card, expressing membership in a certain group. Premium brands, for instance, can even engender a sense of distinction and prestige. Moreover, in the developed industrial and the newly industrializing countries, brands have actually become part of how people build up their identities and gain fulfillment in their personal lives. Consuming certain brands is also a means to communicate certain values. By opting for particular brands, a consumer demonstrates that he or she embraces particular values; the brand becomes a tool for identity formation.

Brand loyalty is vitally dependent on how the relationship between the brand and the consumer is nurtured and specifically developed. A strong brand brings with it the opportunity to raise the profile of a product and the company that sells it, setting them apart from rivals in the marketplace. That strong brand can also command a price premium for its producer, and can reduce price elasticity, implying a financial stability for the firm (Merino et al, 2006)

As far as global brands is concerned, previous research has concluded that perceived brand globalness is normally associated to brand quality and prestige (Steenkamp et al, 2005), higher esteem (Johansson and Ronkainen, 2005), having the ability of enhancing the consumer’s self-image as being cosmopolitan, sophisticated and modern (Friedman, 1990, Thompson and Tambiah, 1999). From a cultural point of view, consumers consider global brands to be symbols of cultural ideas (Holt et al, 2004), using brands to participate in a perceived global identity that they share with other people worldwide. In the process, some of these brands have attained the status of global icons, becoming cultural systems in their own...
Even though the debate between global vs. local brand has been intense and well-documented, there are still some important pending questions regarding the understanding of the specific impact of perceived globalness on each of the sources of brand equity. The power of a brand resides in consumer’s mind and occurs when the consumer has a high level of awareness and familiarity with the brand and holds some strong, favorable and unique brand associations in memory (Keller, 2003). It is interesting to note that some of the most widely accepted brand equity models are based on the idea of sequential steps or stages in the relationship brand-consumer, graphically depicted as a pyramid in several models (Keller, 2003, Brand Dynamics from Millward Brown represented in Figure 1).

The five building blocks of the brand building process are described below:

Presence
The first step is to stimulate active knowledge of the brand-Presence. Active knowledge implies unaidedly aware, have tried brand, or an endorsement of the brand on key image dimensions which show they have an understanding of what the brand promises. Recognition triggers recall of brand memories and feelings, which determines whether people have a deeper relationship with the brand.

Relevance.
To get to the next level the consumer has to feel that the brand could meet their needs-and do so at an acceptable price for them. Negative drivers of loyalty define this level. People don’t move to Relevance if they state that the brand is too expensive, is so cheap they doubt its quality, does not fit their needs, or is not what they want people to see them using. Therefore, Relevance can be thought of as a hurdle that the consumer has to pass over before a stronger relationship with the brand can be developed.

Product Performance
This level requires the consumer to agree that a brand performs acceptably on basic category criteria (e.g., taste and refreshment for a soft drink or location, facilities and service for a hotel). The brand does not have to be better than its competitors. But it does have to offer an acceptable level of product delivery. If a brand has a genuinely superior product and consumers are aware of this, then this will form a brand advantage.

Advantage
Many brands may be acceptable, but for the brand to be more valuable to the consumer it needs some form of ‘perceived advantage’. This level has a number of generic dimensions (e.g., stronger perceived popularity, greater appeal, better pricing, superior performance), but others will be category specific. This can be a direct extension of some unique aspect of the product delivery. However, in many categories brands have little genuine product differentiation. For these brands, softer aspects such as saliency, emotional appeal, personality and popularity can provide the advantage.

Bonding
The more the consumer feels that the brand is the only one that offers key advantages within their repertoire, the greater the bond between the consumer and the brand, and the more loyal they are likely to be.

As for global brands, even though their association with enhanced quality and prestige has been empirically shown, it is not clear in which of the previous building blocks these associations are prevalent. This is a critical issue because customer loyalty only exists when a relationship between a consumer and a brand has reached the bonding block (or brand resonance, in terms of Keller’s pyramid).

Hypothesis 1: Global brands are not likely to be preferred over local brands on all loyalty drivers.

Cultural differences in Latin America
In Latin America, despite the geographical proximity of countries (especially Brazil, which borders most other countries)
there are major cultural and, even more, behavioral differences across populations, with ultimate reflection on product and service purchasing habits and usage. In this region, countries with frail economies and limited technological development coexist with others where manufacturing activities and the service sector are highly intense and diverse, reaching similar standards to the most advanced countries. Diversity is also present in ethnicities, languages and religions, all of which are related to Hofstede’s (1991) layers of culture. In fact, Lenartowicz and Johnson (2003) found significant differences in values of Latin American managers. As for consumers, a research program conducted by the marketing research agency Research International (entitled Thinking the Future) in nine Latin American countries revealed that due to the low standard of living of most of the population in this region, traveling abroad is not widespread which therefore makes exchange of experiences among the various cultures difficult (unlike what occurs in Europe where exchange of experiences is very intense). Therefore, there are significant differences in general attitudes and consumer behaviors across the different cultures in the region.(Carramenha et al, 1999).

The same research agency conducted another study on global brands in 2001 documented by Holt et al (2004), holding focus-group sessions with more than 1,500 young urban consumers between 20 and 35 years old in 41 countries, including the most important markets in Latin America. The study identified the national culture as one of the main predictors of global brands preference, specifically focusing on two dimensions of national cultural: the individualism-collectivism factor and Global vs Local Focus. Interestingly, this exploratory study found important differences among Latin American Countries, showed in Figure 2.

Hypothesis 2: Latin American consumers will differ in the value assigned to Global compared to local brands. Brazilian consumers would assign higher values for global brands than Mexican consumers.

METHOD

Data

Data used for this research comes from a proprietary BrandZ database generated by Millward Brown. Specific data for this study analyze the value of 669 brands in 24 categories of consumer goods and services in Argentina, Brazil y Mexico through interviews with local consumers in each country in 2000.

Measures

1) Measures for Brand Loyalty: Millward Brown conducted a factor analysis to identify the attributes that could take a brand to the highest level in the brand pyramid, finding five key dimensions:
- Affinity. Composed of both rational and emotional attributes, this is a key indicator of a positive relationship (e.g., better product performance, higher opinion, greater appeal).
- Difference. People see the brand as different from others.
- Challenge. People see the brand as a leader in the category, setting the trends.
- Fame. The brand is salient and growing in popularity, or already popular, within the category.
- Price. The brand has a better price than others.

2) Global Brands: a brand is consider global if it is marketed in several markets according to the opinion of consumers included in one focus group in each of the three countries considered in this research.

3) Covariates: Signature Presence: this is a measure of active knowledge corrected by the relative size of the brand compared to
the category. Therefore, it controls not only for familiarity but also for size (brand sales).

Analysis and Results
The objective of this study is to analyze the impact of a brand’ perceived globalness on the main drivers of consumer loyalty. These drivers represent several dimensions and our main interest is to understand how they differ as a whole between global and local brands. Therefore, the appropriate technique is multivariate analysis of covariance that will test the effect of global brands on the five dimensions of brand loyalty. There are significant correlations among the dependent variables and also with the covariate, as expected.

Applying MANCOVA including global, country, their interaction and Signature Presence as a covariate, there was a significant Global effect according to the four main statistical criteria (Pillai’s Trace, Wilks’ Lambda, Hotelling’s Trace, Roy’s Largest Root), indicating that global and local brands differ across one or more of the five loyalty drivers. The difference between local and global brands is significant for bonding based on differentiation and bonding based on price whereas it was marginally significant for bonding based on affinity.

As for the hypothesized enhanced value of global brands, the analysis of marginal means showed better perceptions in most of the loyalty dimensions, except for price and fame. The results regarding bonding based on differentiation and bonding based on price were expected, because previous research associated global brands with better quality and higher prices. The bonding based on fame is associated with brands that are very popular, and surveyed consumers identified local brands as being more popular than global brands. The positive effect of globalness on brand affinity is marginally significant due to the divergences in the perception of Brazilian and Mexicans compared to Argentineans, who seem to be very connected to their local brands.

**H2** predicted differences in the valuation of global brands among Latin American consumers. Even though the results were in the predicted direction (as shown in the graphics depicting marginal means), post hoc multiple comparisons using Bonferroni, Sheffe and Duncan procedures indicated there were no significant differences among the three groups. However, the marginal means analysis showed that Brazilian consumers assigned better evaluations to global brands than Argentinean and Mexican consumers. In the case of Argentina, it is important to note that data collection was conducted in a moment of a major economic crisis, making consumers turned to local brands.

CONCLUSIONS
This research was aimed at understanding the differential advantage that global brands may have on loyalty drivers, in the context of the three major Latin American markets. Even though consumers recognize the advantage of global brands on differentiation and enhanced quality, it is not clear that global brands are in better position to develop rational and emotional affinity with consumers in these countries. As for local brands, they are perceived to fare better in terms of popularity and price competitiveness.
TABLE 2
MANCOVA RESULTS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
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<th>Hypothesis df</th>
<th>Error df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
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</table>

a. Exact statistic
b. The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.

It is possible that these results vary significantly when the type of product is considered, because categories differ in the importance of the loyalty drivers. A detailed analysis was not feasible because the same categories were not all present in the three countries.

As for the heterogeneity of Latin American Consumers, Brazilian consumers seem to be more open to global brands than Mexican and Argentinian consumers, but these differences were not statistically significant.

REFERENCES


Embodied Agents on a Communication and Branding Website: Modeling Effects Through an Affective Persuasion Route

David Midgley, INSEAD, France
Pablo Lambert de Diesbach, Rouen School of Management, France

ABSTRACT

Branding websites can play an important role in enhancing constructing brand-customer relationship. Such websites are to be considered as other electronic interfaces, and man-machine literature makes sense here. This research proposes to go beyond a mere "simple-effects" approach, and studies an affective approach persuasion route, complementing previous researches measuring either simple effects, or effects via a more cognitive route of persuasion. An experiment is presented, and commented. It is shown that IEEVs (Internet Embodied Virtual Agents) have effects on affective reactions and through those, on website stickiness, through an affective route. Research contributions, limitations and research avenues are finally commented.

1. INTRODUCTION

Internet usage has been widening in the last decade, and new patterns of user behaviour seen on the Internet raise important issues. A recently growing literature in man machine literature, on man-machine interaction in general and particularly on man-virtual agent interaction, leads us to propose modelling the observed effects of an impact of Embodied Internet-based Virtual Agents on interface (here websites) users behaviors. Embodied virtual agents are increasingly used, in various contexts, e.g. teaching, socialization, chats, and now on branding websites. However, to date many of their effects have been studied as simple empirical phenomena, that is, in an approach which suffers from a lack of theoretical framework and with insufficient modeling intents. Theoretical reflection is still necessary. We test a possible persuasion route, for explaining the effects of virtual agents on a construct called the Interface stickiness. We model such effects, relating them to traditional constructs in psychology and marketing.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Among the many issues raised by the explosion of internet, are the nature of the roles of a branding website (Wind & Mahajan, 2002), the way to optimize relationship to a brand online (Kapferer 2002), the relevance of the concepts of presence or the experiential approach (Mathwick & al. 2001) or of immersion online (Hoffman & al. 1996; Diesbach & Jeandrain 2004). Internet is a multi-sensorial media, that is, properly a "multimedia", media. We must remember that during the first years of internet, such interface was much used as a text-content media--in marketing, branding websites were mostly called "online catalogs". Possibilities of immersing the user thanks to (eg) ambience music, other sounds, colours, without speaking of tactile sensations, were disregarded, and we still are in our infancy in term of understanding and modelling the effects of the various sensorial cues available online in a marketing context.

Among such cues are audition and vision. Visual and aural cues offer a very rich variety of emotional and cognitive reactions in a communication context, which may generate persuasion through different, cognitive or affective routes, giving persuasion processes which are far from being clearly understood (Scott 1994), with complex affect-cognition interactions. For instance this may refer to symbolic communication using key words or images, related to dominant values at a given moment in a given society (Barthes 1957, 1964); or to the way affective reactions to elements of a message, may impact beliefs and judgements about the target (Edell & Burke 1987; Burke & Edell 1989; Hirschman 1980; Holman 1980), or last, to how design elements of a message convey a huge symbolic meaning for a given market segment, and may be used in order to mobilize reactions to certain values and use them in a halo-effect persuasion route, to colour the way the message is received and hence impact beliefs and judgement (Floch 1995a, 1995b; Scott 1994). Those different ways of using affective and symbolic reactions in communication leads to speak of what Scott comments as a Visual rhetoric--in the case of images being used.

Some researches study the case of communication delivered by humans to humans and show the particular importance of non-verbal language. Ekman particularly increases our understanding of such little known facet of human communication process (e.g. Ekman 1997; Ekman & al. 1997; Burgoon & al. 1990, 2000), a stream of research which is by the way ancient and multidisciplinary, with different research avenues in Psychology, Anthropology, Marketing and Man-Machine or Man-Agent interaction, since the seminal book by Darwin (1841) presenting a synthesis of Animal-Animal non verbal interactions.

Communication with an EVA therefore mobilizes theories from research in oral and visual communication, and from man-man or man-EVA, non-verbal, communication. That makes the understanding of the persuasion processes even more complex (Bengtsson & al. 2001). As we can interact--with clicks online, or by speaking, or even by giving instructions via our eyes movements--with virtual agents, Nass underlines (Persuasive Technology opening session, May 2007) that theorizing on such issue is a key issue: “The WHY is the key issue” in his words.

2.1 Definitions: Internet embodied virtual agent, Communication, Emotion

A virtual agent is first a piece of software which performs tasks. It is also an autonomous creature. It may perform different tasks, with more or less intelligence (in the meaning commonly used in computing sciences, that is, its capacity to react in an adapted manner, and with autonomy). It can move, talk, give advice, and receive instructions. Above all, it can be made visible to the user in some form. It is hence called an embodied virtual agent (EVA). We will stick to a synthetic, but comprehensive definition: "an EVA is a piece of software, the interface of which is made visible on an electronic interface (it may screen, or in the future via a hologram), which acts on behalf or, or to support, a user, and which is made visible and hearable (and with specific tactile equipments, touchable). Its “physical” design and its degree of “intelligence” are most crucial cues."1

An Internet-based EVA or IEVA refers to such agent. An IEVA can be considered not only as a virtual object constituting an element of design of a site, but also as a human or human-like counterpart. Its characteristics of embodiment or incarnation, is therefore crucial--see e.g. Cassel & al. (2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2001).

1Numerous definitions may be found in the literature, as in e.g. Cassel & Bickmore (2000, p.3); Burgoon & al. (2002, p. 554); Choi & al. (2001, p.1); Cooke & al. (2002, p.488); Lu (2004, p.1).
Cassel (ibid) and Donath highlight the crucial importance of the agent’s design characteristics, “design” meaning here the “physical appearance.”

An agent may effectively be characterized by its physical design, by its verbal and non-verbal language (Burgoon & al. 1990, 2000), by its voice, size, body, clothing (including clothes, accessories), i.e., everything that might generate affective and symbolic reactions as studied by Hirschman (1980) or Scott (1994) (see e.g. Donath 2001a, 2001b; Diesbach & Midgley 2007a) and last by its functionalities. Therefore, embodied agents are both electronic interface design elements (e.g. in a website) and also animated objects that we treat like humans or social beings. Hence the relevance of literatures dealing with humans reactions to elements of design (e.g. those in psychology and in advertising) or with human reactions to humans or human images. Such literatures studied hereafter propose deepening on the impact of design elements and of affect on behaviors.

Definition of communication. Communication refers to transferring information and trying to establish a common opinion or perception between a sender and a receiver (Belch & Belch 1998, p.138). A message can be forwarded by words (text or audio), images, now also by animated images but also in a symbolic or indirect manner, by peripheral elements such as ambience or design elements.

Definition of Emotion. Many scholars use such concept without clarifying it. There is actually no consensus on their conceptualization nor on their role, and place, in human reactions (e.g. Zajonc & al. 1978, 1985, 1986) and even less on the conceptualization nor on their role, and place, in human reactions to humans or human images. Such literatures studied hereafter propose deepening on the impact of design elements and of affect on behaviors.

2.2 The role of images and embodied agents in persuasion

When exposed to an electronic interface and/or an embodied agent, individuals react as if they were interacting with another social being (Nass 1996, 2000). Seminal works by Blumberg and Nass show that this is even more true, if the interface seems “natural” or credible. In a number of works, so-called “approach behaviours” in a traditional contexts as studied in Environmental psychology, are also observed for individuals exposed to an EVA (Koda & al. 1996; Cooke & al. 2002; see also Cassel & al. op.cit.).

Human beings in general look for social contacts in a variety of situations of interaction, whether related to a shopping process or not. A number of researches have studied such issues, for example in shopping, information search, in games and leisure (Bloch & al. 1986). The role of affect in interacting with the interface, and its perceived benefits, become crucial. There could be some innate need for interaction, which EVAs might fulfill. EVAs are therefore also a component of the human interface and more specifically, of its social dimension. In such approach, they can be possible drivers of positive or negative behaviours and intentions of behaviours, as they do in other service encounters, offline (Baker & al. 1992, 1994) as well as online (Diesbach & Midgley 2007a, 2007b).

We will now show that printed ads, texts, packaging and design elements, especially when designed with images, do generate affective reactions and that such effects do make sense in a persuasion process.

Some practitioners and also academics, have advocated for a cognitive approach of the message receiver behaviour, cognition referring here to the conscious, processing of received information, in order to consciously shape a (supposedly rational) evaluation of a target: e.g. a product, a politician, a brand, a course, etc. This has led to an important cognitive bias in persuasion and marketing literature during two decades. Then the ELM (Elaboration Likelihood Model) posited that a receiver can actually form an attitude toward a target via a cognitive, conscious, rational evaluation-based, route (called central route), or via a faster, less conscious or even unconscious, affective (called peripheral) route (Petty & al. 1981, 1983). Traditionally and consistently with the ELM findings, it was considered that affect may become a significant driver for low-involving targets such as brands, products, tasks. Nevertheless major researches by Edell & Burke (1987, 1989) show that affect can impact beliefs, that is, supposedly highly rational judgements, even for highly involving targets such as politicians, products, brands. That is, emotional reactions to ambience or design stimuli used in a communication setting, may not only impact Likelihood, or some emotional component of Attitude, but also, the very beliefs attached to the considered target. Research in affect-driven consumer behaviour by Scott (1994) or by Floch (see for instance his analysis of, e.g., APPLE vs IBM symbolic communication strategies in e.g. Floch 1995b) show the high relevance of taking into account images and their affective and symbolic effects, in the persuasion processes. For example, Kroeber-Riel reports varying effects related to a human photo attractiveness and/or gender, are observed, with fix human images, on persuasiveness (Kroeber-Riel 1979, 1984), particularly on beliefs about a product performance and on the time dedicated to the textual part vs the visual part of the message. It is unclear whether gender or attractiveness drives reactions, but an attractive female photo and a classical look male photo generate very different effects on affective reactions and mediation in the persuasion process. Scott (1994) also shows the effects of photos, especially with high aesthetic dimensions, on attitudes and intentional behaviors. Burgoon & al. show that different communication formats (text+voice, text+voice+fix image, text+voice+agent, text+voice+real human image) generate different levels of perceived credibility on the one hand, and different real persuasion levels on the other hand, and that the order of persuasion effects across those different formats vary between the two measured effect (perceived credibility and real persuasion: that is, the format declared as the most persuasive, Human face-to-face, is actually not the more persuasive). A number of communication situations with printed or online communication situations (ads, messages) are also detailedly analyzed by Alfano & O’Brien, which show effects on affect and on beliefs about the message content. Hence unconscious persuasion processes have to be studied.

Still, one of the crucial issues in such approach is the fact that we do not know how affect and cognition do interact, if they do, in persuasion processes. Zajonc (op.cit) shows that affect may interact with cognition but that it also may not need cognition in order to
generate beliefs, or preferences; that is, to persuade. Edell & Burke (op.cit.) show important effects of affect not only on (for example) intention to vote or to buy, but also on variables traditionally seen as highly cognition-driven, such as beliefs towards a target. Linda Scott proposes several persuasion routes when subjects are exposed to an image. It is therefore proposed here that animated images such as embodied agents, exactly as (or even more than) fixed images, can generate emotions and through them, affect persuasion. Generating emotions, they can directly generate approach behaviors and/or intentional approaches. They can also impact beliefs and hence attitude, as posited by Burke & Edell, and by Scott in her symbolic route. They would have in turn effects on behaviors and intentions of behaviors. It is therefore proposed that EVAs in general and in an internet context in particular, and because they are (animated) beings), or because they behave as do alive beings, they generate affective reactions and persuasive effects. Those results show that human peers or visible virtual agents do generate emotional reactions which in turn impact persuasion.

3. RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESIS

Research model and hypothesis. The research model posits positive effects of an IEVA on affective reactions, and through them on online stickiness, that is, on Approach behaviors in an online context. Affective reactions are conceptualized and operationalized following Novak & al. seminal work (2000). Such affective space conceptualization, and operationalization, is inherited from a 20-years long research stream in Psychology, Ergonomics and Environmental Psychology first (Mehrabian & Russel 1974; Mehrabian 1978; Russel & Prat 1982). A number of criticalisms which has been done on such approach in Marketing do not hold well in a man-machine or man-agent context, were the Mehrabian & Russel conceptualization is extremely relevant as they deal with the effects of ambience cues on working, data search, discovering (and not specifically commercial) contexts. Then, a number of academics criticized the relevance of the affective construct of Feeling of controlling/handling the situation, of “Dominance,” in the M&R approach. But again, a number or pre-test interviews with professionals confirmed, conversely to Marketing scholars comments, the high relevance of the Dominance construct in the case of navigating on internet. We hence adopted the M&R conceptualization of the affective space, and its application to an Internet context proposed by Novak & al. (2000), with 3 dimensions (Pleasure, Arousal, Dominance) and 12 items.

Our criterion variable is called Online Stickiness. Our objective is to capture the capacity of the interface, here a website, to stick, retain the user, make her spend more time, on the interface: hence the idea of “sticking her on an interface”. In short it refers to the idea of making an individual decide to spend more time on a given place, in a given space, but also, to have the intention of returning to it, to recommend it to other users.

This “word” of “Stickiness” can be considered as a real “concept” of interest, as it exactly corresponds to the concept of approach behavior as posited by Mehrabian & Russel and in general, scholars in Environmental Psychology.

With the proposed measurements in our construct operationalization that follows, it exactly matches the adaptation of Approach behaviors posited by Mehrabian & Russel (1974), to a service or interface context: “to stay, explore, come back, affiliate”. Online stickiness consists of 2 (behavioral and intentional) dimensions and 4 components (Number of visited pages, Visit duration; Intention to recommend, Intention to return to the site):

Hypothesis H1_{a,b,c,d}: the presence of an IEVA has a positive effects on emotional reactions (index a,b,c depending whether 1, 2 or 3 affective reactions will emerge from the emotional space dimensionality). Assuming 3 dimensions do emerge (Pleasure, Arousal, Dominance) we will propose:

H1_{a} assumes positive effects of the agent presence on Pleasure,
H1_{b} assumes positive effects of the agent presence on Arousal,
H1_{c} addresses negative effects on Dominance.

For each emotional dimension (Pleasure, Arousal, Dominance) we assume positive effects of such affective reaction on the 4 components of the Interface Stickiness, that is:

H2_{a,b,c,d}: we expect positive effects of Pleasure on each Stickiness component, namely on Navigation duration
(H2a), on Number of page visited (H2b), on Intention to revisit (H2c) and on Intention to return (H2d); 

H3(a,b,c,d): we expect similar positive effects of Arousal on each Stickiness component: on Navigation duration (H3a), on Number of page visited (H3b), on Intention to revisit (H3c) and on Intention to return (H3d); 

H4(a,b,c,d): we expect similar positive effects of Dominance on each Stickiness component: on Navigation duration (H4a), on Number of page visited (H4b), on Intention to revisit (H4c) and on Intention to recommend (H4d). 

The following figure summarizes the proposed hypothesis in a global model (see next page figure 1).

4. THE EXPERIMENT, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Description of the laboratory experiment

A laboratory experiment has been conducted with 300 randomly recruited subjects, in the France Telecom R&D Center, HCI Division, at Issy (outskirts of Paris, France). The recruitment was outsourced to an external company which contacted subjects by mail and phone. Each one was paid 15 E for a navigation session at FTR&D center. They were randomly assigned to one of two possible navigation conditions: a website with no virtual agent (control condition), or with an agent (experimental condition). They were a representative sample of the French internet user population at the moment of the experiment in terms of age and gender. All users were experienced web users with at least 2 years internet-use experience. Subjects were exposed to one of two real brand sites and to 4 virtual agents (or no agent) created ad-hoc, 2 agents being tested on each site. The log files, could be collected from one site only, allowing behavioral stickiness measurement. The two tested sites presented French high quality olive oil (site called PRIMOLEA), and Swiss-made diving watches (site called TRASER). The TRASER website still exists in its corporate, Swiss-based version (see: www.traserh3watches.com), but not anymore in the French version in which it was then tested for the experiment. Research agreements had been negotiated and the two website managers had given us the authorization and codes to our technicians so that we could use the real website versions, in an unmodified version vs a modified, with virtual agent, version. We will hereafter refer to site 1 for PRIMOLEA site (Olive Oil) and to site 2 for TRASER site (diving watches). Each website was tested in its “with Agent” configurations, with 2 different agents: one that was pre-tested as “congruent” with the site and the brand, one that was perceived as “non congruent”. The effects of Congruency on affect or Stickiness are not analyzed here.

A company located in Paris had also made specific virtual agents for the experiment (2 agents for each of the 2 websites, that is, 4 agents), as exemplified hereafter (figure 2).

After purification (for non serious performance, unserious answers to the questionnaire, and for having no experience online (2 subjects), only 292 subjects data collections were considered valid for data analysis.4

FIGURE 1
Effects of EVAs on stickiness: Affective route of persuasion
4.2 Results and discussion

The constructs. The used measurement scales consists of 12 items for affective reactions. Scale measurements are done on 9-points Likert scale for affective reactions of Pleasure, Arousal, Dominance on the one hand, and for Intentional dimension of Stickiness: i.e Intention to return (1 item) and Intention to recommend (3 items). For Behavioral Stickiness, Navigation Duration is measured in number of seconds, and Number of pages was directly measured (both thanks to the extracted log files). A traditional method following Hair & al. (2002) and Malhotra (2000) is applied, with exploratory factorial analysis, and confirmatory factorial analysis with Structural equation modeling.

Effects of the manipulation on affective reactions, and of affective reactions on the 4 components of stickiness are assessed via linear regressions.

Only two dimensions emerge: Pleasure, and Dominance (that if the feeling of controlling the situation). The dimension of Arousal disappears in the analysis, therefore all hypothesis related to effects on Arousal and effects of Arousal on Stickiness disappear from our testing: H1b and H3a,b,c,d, that is, the effects of the agents on Arousal, and of Arousal on Stickiness, will not be tested.

The construct of Stickiness is validated, consisting of the 2 conceptualized, Behavioral (Number of pages and Visit duration) and Intentional (Intention to revisit and Intention to recommend) dimensions. The related hypothesis will be tested: H1a and H2; H1c and H4.

Effects observed into and through the affective route of influence

The first step of the model is not confirmed. The presence of the agent has a non significant impact on Pleasure (p=0.42 for site1, p=0.47 for site2, both NS), as well as on Dominance, even if effects are much closer to significance levels (p=0.096 site1, p=0.19 for site2, both NS). That is, the manipulation of agent presence has, very surprisingly, no significant effects on affective reactions.

The second step of the route of influence is partly validated, that is, on intentional stickiness only. Pleasure and Dominance have no significant effects on Behavioral stickiness (Visit duration and Number of pages visited), H2a and H2p, as well as H4a and H4p are disconfirmed (NS). Still, we observe simple effects of presence on Behavioral stickiness, without the mediation of affect: that means, such effect exist but not through the affective reactions.

Conversely, Pleasure has a highly significant effect on intentional stickiness (H2c***, H2d***, p<0.001), and Dominance has a non significant effect but very close to significance, on the recommendation component of intentional stickiness (H4c NS on the intention to revisit; H4d (p=0.1) on the intention to recommend).

5. CONCLUSION, LIMITS, RESEARCH AVENUES

5.1 Conclusions

We have recorded some of the important results in the literature on man-agent interaction, and have highlighted that most researches conducted on EVAs, do not propose a comprehensive enough theoretical framework. We point out that missing point as a major weakness from an academic point of view.

Then we show the relevance of an affective approach in understanding agents effects, and in particular, of the affective conceptualization and operationalization proposed in Environmental Psychology. Last, we propose a new construct, called Interface Stickiness, and in our case, Website stickiness, that perfectly fit with the Environmental approach, and that has the advantage of putting together behavioural and intentional measurements. Such conceptualization and operationalization is also a contribution of this work.

This research proposes a model which may explain a part of the observed effects. We propose and test an affective route of influence on behavioural and on intentional measurements, that
constitute an application to an online context of the Approach behaviors inherited from Environmental psychology, called the Website Stickiness.

The construct of Website stickiness is validated. When, posited hypothesis are tested. In the presented research on 2 sites, the presence of the Internet, Embodied virtual agent (IEVA) does not impact significantly the 2 emotional dimensions that emerge from the affective space. We observe effects of both affective reactions on Intention to revisit and Intention to recommend. Such affective reactions do convince users to stay on touch or affiliate users, but other drivers lead them to actually navigate longer or more in depth on the site.

As we know, from other studies, that agent’s presence does actually generate behavioural stickiness, our model lacks of specification, or our subject group must be divided into smaller groups in order to capture significant effects that may be blurred in a global approach. In other words, there might be moderators that have not been taken into account in the present approach. Our model must be refined, more specified, taking into account other, non considered, possible drivers of affect, and of stickiness.

5.2 Limits of the research and research avenues

First, the embodied agents are tested only in a brand relationship construction context. That is, results may not be generalized to (e.g.) games, narration, socialization or learning contexts, which are all research avenues.

We have not tested the possible effects of the topic addressed by the agent. Nevertheless, some researches show that this matters, online in general (ex CdRom vs T-shirt commercial website (Lynch & al. 2001)), or when a subject is exposed to fix photos of a speaker (Nguyen & Masthoff 2007). The later show that the congruence between the topic addressed and the preferred look of the speaker, is treated differently according to the considered context (e.g. in Fitness programs vs Healthcare), and that the predicted effects in term of persuasion vary from one topic (hypothesis verified for health programs) to another one (unverified for fitness programs). Diesbach & Midgley (2007b) also find varying results across branding, informational websites, in their testing the Hierarchy of cognitive effects on persuasion. That means, the topic addressed on the interface, and presented by the agent, must interact with agent design in some way, in impacting persuasion: that is an important, unexplored topic.

One important limit is inherent to any experiment: we have controlled a number of variables such as the real navigation on the site and exposition to the agent. But in spite of a large sample, the generalizability of our findings is limited by the fact that we cannot know if other, non-controlled variables, have had an effect. Such variables may be individual-related, as well as agent-related, or site/brand-related.

As far as individuals are concerned, we should address for example, the possible effects of gender, of the subjects expertise with the tested interface, of individual variables such as ICT-related Innovativeness, the effect of psychological traits such as the Need for cognition vs the Need for emotions, the subjects age or gender, level of education: all those variables might be fruitfully integrated in the model and dramatically help academics to understand and predict effects, and managers to properly design their agents according to the targeted segments for which they want their IEVAs to generate such affective, and behavioural or intentional effect.

Many variables related to the agents design may also moderate the studied effects. Additionally, many virtual agent-design related variables may also need to be taken into account: agent agreeableness, more specifically its gender, size, format (only head or all the body), its level of anthropomorphism, zoomorphism, or totally imagined, cartoon-like design, its non-verbal language cues, its voice and the many variables related to audio interaction. These last points also open a number of research avenues related to research in psychology, and man-man and man-machine interaction.

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Effect of Brand Extension on Brand Image: A Study in the Brazilian Context
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ABSTRACT
The article investigates the consequences of brand extension in the Brazilian context, analyzing how the variables relating to the parent brand (quality, similarity of categories, familiarity and customer attitude) influence brand image after extension, and the variation in customer’s interest in the original product category, before and after extension. Four hypotheses were tested through regression equations and two through mean comparisons. Results confirmed that the effects of the extension strategy are regardless of the product category under study and type of extension. Also, customer’s interest in the original product category proved to be affected negatively after extension.

INTRODUCTION
Competitive pressure has led companies to an ever increasing number of product launches, and brand extensions eventually become an apparently reliable means to increase sales quickly and at a relatively low cost. As a reflection of this common corporate strategy, the studies on the relevance of brand extensions as a marketing strategy and their evaluation by the customer have multiplied in the international academic field (AAKER; KELLER, 1990; BRONIARCZYK; ALBA, 1994; JOHN et al., 1998; SHEININ, 1998; KLINK; SMITH, 2001; PARK; KIM, 2001; HEM et al., 2003). Nevertheless, the topic continues to be quite controversial, principally in relation to the effectiveness of this strategy.

This article investigates the consequences of brand extension (using a brand name established in one product category to be extended to another, AAKER, 1998) in the Brazilian context and discusses this marketing strategy from the customer’s viewpoint to assess its effects on the evaluation of the original brand image. It extends the study by Martinez; Chernatony (2004) analyzing how the variables relating to the parent brand (quality, similarity of categories, familiarity and customer attitude) influence brand image after extension. The results of two brands in different product categories are compared: mobiles and sandals. As an additional contribution to Martinez; Chernatony (2004), the article also analyzes interest in the original product category, before and after extension.

Brand extension differs from line extension in that the latter is placed in the same product category as the original brand. Common line extension is, for example, when there are more yoghurt options of the same brand, offering alternative diet versions, sizes and flavours. The article specifically addresses brand extensions, but both line and brand extensions have brand elasticity (capacity for the brand to be extended, keeping its identity and positioning). Extension of both line and brand is, therefore, the strategy used to capitalise a name already installed in the customer’s mind (WILENSKY, 2003). Despite the apparent simplicity when applying brand extensions, the disadvantages are by no means few, such as stagnation of the category demand (QUELCH; KENNY, 2000), brand image dilution (LOKEN; JOHN, 1993; JOHN et al., 1998), detriment to the parent brand image by creating new associations or confusing current associations (AAKER, 1998; AAKER; KELLER, 1990), among many other considerations.

Brand image refers to the set of associations linked to the brand in the customer’s mind. Customer perceptions of one brand reflect, therefore, associations of this brand present in the mind (KELLER, 1993). The closer and better these associations, the higher the brand value. Brand image consists of functional and symbolic beliefs (LOW; LAMB, 2000). For example, Volvo cars are considered the safest because they have specific technology for this, with its own characteristics, such as its test field, which is a worldwide benchmark in safety tests. However, Volvo reinforces this aspect by creating a “safest car” positioning through its communication, building an environment full of safety-related symbologies.

Brand image can be analyzed from two aspects: general brand image (GBI) relating to the brand name and its symbolic aspects, and product brand image (PBI), directly relating to physical attributes and the product’s functional, emotional and self-expression benefits (Martinez; Chernatony, 2004). The differentiation and specification between the characteristics of image and product are necessary because global measures of brand image or attitude cannot absorb the actual extent of the damage to the original brand by an unsuccessful brand extension (LOKEN; JOHN, 1993). Brand and product image are the dependent variables on the model to be presented below. The studies and definitions under discussion are the basis for defining the following hypotheses of the article.

HYPOTHESES
According to John et al. (1998), extensions run the risk of diluting what the brand name means to the customers, especially in the case of extensions inconsistent with the brand image or that fail to meet the customer’s expectations. A number of other studies confirmed this position, ratifying that brand extensions can weaken the customer’s feelings and opinions about the brand name (LOKEN; JOHN, 1993).

Brand extension can increase the main association of the product, strengthening instead of weakening the brand image (Pitta et al., 1995). Extensions can also strengthen specific brand associations: an extension in a category that shares the same benefit can strengthen this association with the brand name and, consequently, increase the values of the brand in the original product category (Broniarczyk et al., 1994). Therefore, an appropriate extension can cancel out such a dreaded dilution of the brand. Moreover, an extended brand can compensate for the lack of similarity in the new category through associations relating to its own benefits. Since there is no consensus on this topic, the first hypothesis is the following:

\[ H_1: \text{Choosing brand extension has a diluting effect (a) on the general brand image and (b) on the product image.} \]

Perceived brand quality is one of the brand equity assets (value given to a brand by the customers, in addition to the functional characteristics of a product), hence, a determining factor of the brand image. This is the customer’s decision based on intangible knowledge of quality, not necessarily based on specific attributes (ZEITHAML, 1988). Very often the use of established brand names is a good way to reach quality perception (AAKER, 1998, p. 223; ZEITHAML, 1988, SWAMINATHAN et al., 2001), and this perception may take different forms for different types of industry. The IBM perceived quality has a different meaning than that of Nestlé. Perceived quality directly influences buying decisions, especially when a customer is motivated or capacitated to make a detailed analysis of the purchase. It may also sustain a premium
price, increasing the brand’s profitability and its brand equity (AAKER, 1998, p. 20).

Swaminathan et al. (2001) found that, in the failure of brand extensions, there are potential reciprocal effects, namely, interference from the reputation of the parent brand in assessing brand extension and vice-versa. A brand with strong perceived quality rating can still be unaffected by failed extensions (AAKER, 1998). Provided that the parent brand’s degree of quality is maintained in the extensions, the higher the number of extended goods, the better the brand evaluation (Dacin; Smith, 1994). Hence H2:

$$H_2: \text{Perceived brand quality has a positive effect (a) on the general brand image after extension and (b) on the product image after extension.}$$

Familiarity refers to brand knowledge in the customer’s mind (CAMPBELL; KELLER, 2003). Familiar brands are different from non-familiar brands according to the recall of a customer. Customers make different associations with familiar brands: whether for their own or family use, through friends or a contact in the press or advertising. Familiarity, especially when addressing goods with low involvement, can guide the buying decision. Where there is no motivation for deeper evaluation, this insight may be fundamental (AAKER, 1998, p.68).

If, on one hand, the role of familiarity in forming brand image is clear, its role on the other in the customer’s evaluation of extensions is still unclear. When there is a low degree of brand information, the customers trust in the brand’s quality and familiarity to make their evaluations (Keller, 1990). According to John et al. (1998), flagship products are less susceptible to the effects of diluting parent brand extension due to the customers’ widespread exposure, familiarity and experience with such goods. Variation in the measure of brand image may depend on brand familiarity (Low; Lamb, 2000) and customer reaction to an extension may be affected by customer familiarity with brand products (Klink; Smith, 2001). Hence H3 is:

$$H_3: \text{Customer brand familiarity has a positive effect (a) on the general brand image after extension and (b) on the product image after extension.}$$

There is considerable evidence that category similarity (fit) is related to brand extension evaluation (AAKER; KELLER, 1990; BOUSH; LOKEN, 1991; KELLER; AAKER, 1992). Similarity between the categories (the original and extended) is an important condition in the customer’s evaluation of brand extensions. When they are very similar, customers more easily transfer parent brand attributes to the extended brand. However, they find that some factors, such as local environment and degree of customer knowledge about the parent brand, act as determining agents to expand or reduce the influence of similarity (Broniarczyk; Alba, 1994).

A brand has greater elasticity when the new category is similar to the original (AAKER; KELLER, 1990; BOUSH; LOKEN, 1991), but this relationship can be relative to the perception of brand prestige or functionality (Park; Kim, 2001). On the other hand, Broniarczyk; Alba (1994) showed that the attributes are the prime determining factor of brand elasticity and that they are not only restricted to prestige or functionality.

The importance of the fit for extension has two motives: the first is that perceived quality can be transferred more from one brand when the two classes of goods are consistent with each other; the second is because a poor fit not only weakens the transfer of positive associations but also may encourage undesired associations and opinions. When the fit is low, the customer can question the company’s skill in making a good new product, and if it is confusing, the customer may ridicule the extension (AAKER; KELLER, 1990).

If, on one hand, fit is required in an extension, extremely easy extensions may be less accepted by the customer (AAKER; KELLER, 1990), or because the extension would not justify the price charged or because it would be inconsistent to apply a quality name to such a trivial product class (AAKER; KELLER, 1990). Moreover, Dacin and Smith (1994) found that successive extensions, successful in a number of categories, can reduce the effect of the fit in the next extensions (the customer would understand that everything that the company does, it does it well). More recently, Klink; Smith (2001) observed that effects of the fit are less than expected, consequently giving more flexibility to the brands. This would explain to them why brands such as General Electric are in such a variety of goods, such as a light bulb and a reactor, or Yamaha in motorbikes and tennis racquets. Hence H4:

$$H_4: \text{The similarity perceived by the customer has a positive effect (a) on the general brand image after the extension and (b) on the product images after extension.}$$

Attitude [predisposition in assessing an object or product positively or negatively] towards brands is important because it is the basis of the brand choosing process (Keller, 1993). Brand attitudes form a model defined as the sum of customer opinions about a product or service, multiplied by the strength of the evaluation of each of these opinions. An important implication of this model is that many positively assessed opinions can be defeated by a few strongly negative opinions (PITTA et al., 1995). For example, if a customer tries a diet juice and likes the taste, it can be evaluated as positive due to these two attributes (low calories and taste), but, depending on the type of sweetener used, it may be evaluated as a health hazard and the product is rejected.

Customer attitudes towards brand extension alter associations with the parent brand. Faircloth et al. (2001) found that the attitude towards the brand has a direct effect on brand image and indirect effect on brand equity. Zimmer, Bhat (2004), through four experiments, evidence that an extension enhances the attitude toward the parent brand or keeps it intact, regardless of the variation in quality and fit of the extension. Therefore, H5 is:

$$H_5: \text{Customer attitudes towards extension will have a positive effect (a) on the general brand image after extension and (b) on the product image after extension.}$$

One of the benefits of brand extension is that a large variety of associations with the parent brand can be potentially transferred to the extensions, more easily making positive associations with the new product. One of the various possible brand associations can be with a product category. Brahma, Chevrolet and Levi’s are brands that definitively have a close association with the product category to which they belong. The product category of the original brand, especially a familiar one such as beer or a car, can itself have a set of associations attached to the extension. The impact of these associations, highly valued in the original product category, may not be positive in the context of the new product category (AAKER; KELLER, 1990).

A phenomenon that may occur with extensions is that customers deduce about extension attributes that did not exist in the extended category before. Thus, an extended brand may contribute to a new attribute for this category, until then non-existent, due to its inclusion in this category with its key attribute. For example, dental cream, when included in the category of candies or chewing
gum, may introduce the attribute of dental protection into this category (Broniarczyk; Alba, 1994).

This means that brand extensions influence associations of new categories either positively or negatively. Should these associations be positive, they will certainly strengthen the pre-existing associations in the original category. But, if negative, does the new extension affect the customer’s first associations about this product category? Starting with the premise that brand associations differ between brands and product categories (LOW; LAMB, 2000) and that brand extensions can have diluting effects on the brands (LOKEN; JOHN, 1993), the hypothesis considers that these same effects could be extended to the original product category, with a diluting effect of its specific associations. Hence H6:

\[ H_6: \text{The option of brand extension has a diluting effect on the interest for the original product category.} \]

**METHOD**

The empirical study included analysis of secondary data and qualitative and quantitative stages. The secondary data was used to identify major media advertisers directed at the 25-40 age group belonging to classes A and B (according to the Brazilian rating criterion adopted by the National Association of Research Companies) to obtain a list of advertised products and most relevant brands for this public. From those data mobiles and sandals were found to be two of the most representative categories.

The qualitative stage consisted of a focus group and in-depth interviews. The first was used to define the most similar extension categories to mobiles and sandals. It was held in April 2005, consisting of eight university students living in the city of Rio de Janeiro. The best known brands were presented followed by better and lesser known brand extensions. The interviewees were asked to give their perceptions and reasons why they would consume the brands that are known brand extensions, and suggest other possible brand extensions. Accordingly it was possible to evaluate whether the hypotheses presented made sense among the population of interest, and also produced useful information to structure the protocol for the in-depth interview.

In-depth interviews were performed to gather the most identified characteristics in these brands, competitive brands and possible extension categories. Fifteen Rio de Janeiro dwellers were interviewed. The characteristics identified at this stage of the research were:

a) **Associations:** the students described attributes or feelings associated with the product categories (mobiles and sandal), obtaining more than 50 associations, many with the same concept. The associations were grouped by two advertising agents-brand image specialists and the result was a list of four associations, later used in the survey.

b) **Quality and familiarity:** four brands were identified for each category (those with most recall in the focus group). In a free association, the interviewees indicated the best perceived quality goods in each of the main brands of the two categories and indicated the degree of familiarity with such brands. Nokia and Havaianas brands were chosen for mobiles and sandals, respectively.

c) **Extension choice:** the interviewees informed about the degree of similarity of a series of eight products with the two brands under study. The products in the questionnaire were obligatorily different from those sold under the brands researched.

d) **Elasticity:** the interviewees were asked what other products the companies of the brands under study could launch.

The answers gave an idea of the brand’s elasticity and type of product that might be proposed.

The products with leading brands are less vulnerable to dilution in inappropriate extensions (JOHN et al., 1998; ZIMMER; BHAT, 2004), which is why the selected brands were leading brands representing their segment. At the same time, brands with little or no extension were used, so that possible effects of successive extensions (KELLER; AAKER, 1992) would not harm the results. Moreover, two brands were selected from different categories to better evaluate the customer’s behaviour in the extension, since two brands in the same category could present very similar results and making comparison difficult.

The next stage was the quantitative study through a cross-section survey. The measurements and indicators of each variable were the same as in Martinez; Chernatony (2004), considering adaptations to the Portuguese language and comments on the pre-test of the questionnaire. All Likert scales used with five response categories ranging from “I fully disagree” to “I agree fully” were:

- **Perceived quality (QUA):** adapted from Park and Kim (2001) on customer-brand relations, measured by quality levels with the product and brand.
- **Brand familiarity (FAM):** adapted from Dawar (1996), in which the measurements reflect the degree of brand knowledge, buying frequency and product knowledge.
- **Similarity of categories (FIT):** adapted from Park and Kim (1991), which measured the fit between the extended product and original brand products, and the fit between the extended product and parent brand image.
- **Brand attitude (ATT):** adapted from Klink and Smith (2001), is related to the favourable perception of the new product and possible purchase of the new product.
- **Brand image (GBI and PBI):** was applied in two ways, as in Martinez and Chernatony (2004), by investigating the general brand image (GBI), and product image (PBI). GBI was measured by adapting Aaker’s (1996) original scale items, which measured brand preference, its personality, cost-value, brand interest and its differentiation in relation to competition. PBI was measured for four attributes or feelings associated with products under study, deriving from the qualitative stage of the study: mobiles (practical, durable, give status and are used by cool people) and sandals: (resistant, comfortable, practical and attractive).

The two measurements were made before (GBI1, PBI1) and after extension (GBI2, PBI2).

f) **Interest in category (CAT):** adapted from Beatty and Talpade (1994) (apud. BRUNER et al, 2001, p. 328), with indicators referring to the interest, importance and enjoyment of the subject.

Some variables not considered herein above may influence customer evaluation on brand extensions. An attempt, therefore, was made to reduce its effect to a minimum by checking its existence in the qualitative part of the study and obtaining the sample. Such variables are: customer knowledge of the new product category (BRONIARCZYK; ALBA, 1994), parent brand category time of existence (AAKER, 1998), brand acknowledgement (AAKER; KELLER, 1990) and customer’s parent brand knowledge (BRONIARCZYK; ALBA, 1994).

Four groups of questionnaires were prepared with analogue questions so that each one had a brand and extension category: Nike and trainers, Nike and watch, Havaianas and T-shirt, Havaianas and mobile. The extensions were labelled as in Figure 1. Questionnaires
CAT1 (before extension) and CAT2 (after extension) was tested. Extension, two regression equations for testing the H2 to H5 hypotheses were adopted for testing H6, in which the equality of the averages of the product image after extension and product image (significant at 95% for all brands and categories using test t, except for NOKTEN-GBI, which was 90%).

Therefore, considering the t values, the hypothesis that the brand extension strategy has a diluting effect on brand image is not rejected, whether it is general brand or product image. This is also regardless of the product category and type of extension—if it is more discreet (more similar categories) or more daring (very different categories).

Hypothesis H6 refers to brand extension having a diluting effect on the interest in the original product category. Table 1 shows that there is considerable difference in the averages of CAT1 and CAT2 values, in the total sample in each sub-sample, except for HAVCEL. Since the average values after the extension are always lower than the initial values, there is evidence that there is a diluting effect in the interest of the original product category, although not for all extensions.

Hypotheses H2 to H5 were tested using the multiple linear regression method and only the overall sample (384 questionnaires answered by 192 people). Although each element has answered two questionnaires at the same time, no one answered the same questionnaire twice, and does not invalidate the process (use of information grouped in a regression is common in extension studies, as in Martinez, Chernatony, 2004). Table 2 shows the coefficients of each regression equation.

From Table 2, the R2 values are low (0.342 for GBI2 and 0.289 for PBI2) but close to those found in Martinez and Chernatony (2004) (0.425 for GBI2 and 0.333 for PBI2), showing that less than 35% of the variation in the dependent variable (general brand image after extension and product image after extension) is explained by the independent variables.

All H2 to H5 hypotheses are not rejected at the 95% level of probability, except H4b (showing that the similarity between the original and extended categories did not have a positive effect on the product image after extension).
Effect of Brand Extension on Brand Image: A Study in the Brazilian Context

**FINAL REMARKS**

The study herein demonstrated that the brand extension strategy may be detrimental to brand image, causing a diluting effect on brand associations in the customer’s mind. The quality perceived by the customer in relation to the original brand, customer familiarity with the parent brand and the customer’s attitude towards this brand may contribute favourably to the final brand image after extension, whether it is the general brand or product image. Also, the fit between the original and extended product category may benefit the general brand image after extension, but not the product image.

The results also showed that the customer’s interest in the original product category can be affected negatively after extension, showing that the diluting effect of extension spreads not only to the extended brand but to its entire category. It is evident that an unsuccessful brand extension of a single brand individually would be unable to harm an entire category, principally when addressing a rising category, such as mobiles. However, it is necessary to be aware of the action of brand extensions in decadent categories, for example. It is possible that this unsuccessful extension harms future launchings in this category, but to state this, more studies on the subject would have to be done on samples representing the population of interest.

The results found for hypotheses H2 to H5 do not differ much from the category under study or type of extension (if narrower or more daring), which leads to the conclusion that its effects are the same, regardless of these criteria. When comparing the results of this study with those obtained by Martínez; Chernatony (2004), it

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**TABLE 1**

Test of $H_1 a$, $H_1 b$ and $H_6$ hypotheses

$X.XX$ to $Y.YY$ indicates that the average of $GBI_1$, $PBI_1$ or $CAT_1$ was $X.XX$, changing to $Y.YY$ after extension ($GBI_2$, $PBI_2$ or $CAT_2$).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$GBI_2$ t values</th>
<th>$GBI_2$ β values</th>
<th>$PBI_2$ t values</th>
<th>$PBI_2$ β values</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1a (GBI)</td>
<td>HAVCAM</td>
<td>3.85 to 3.72</td>
<td>3.77 to 3.25</td>
<td>3.15 to 3.03</td>
<td>3.31 to 3.13</td>
<td>3.52 to 3.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.513</td>
<td>9.012</td>
<td>1.682</td>
<td>3.072</td>
<td>7.753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HAVCEL</td>
<td>3.98 to 3.86</td>
<td>3.92 to 3.65</td>
<td>3.35 to 2.94</td>
<td>3.52 to 3.24</td>
<td>3.70 to 3.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6 (CAT)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.07 to 2.90</td>
<td>2.81 to 2.70</td>
<td>3.23 to 2.88</td>
<td>3.27 to 3.04</td>
<td>3.09 to 2.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.590</td>
<td>1.364</td>
<td>4.769</td>
<td>3.525</td>
<td>6.014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**TABLE 2**

Coefficients of linear regression model (testing hypotheses H2 to H5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$GBI_2$ t values</th>
<th>$GBI_2$ β values</th>
<th>$PBI_2$ t values</th>
<th>$PBI_2$ β values</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H2a</td>
<td>QUA</td>
<td>6.598</td>
<td>0.305</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2b</td>
<td>QUA</td>
<td>8.066</td>
<td>0.387</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3a</td>
<td>FAM</td>
<td>-4.674</td>
<td>-0.215</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3b</td>
<td>FAM</td>
<td>-3.720</td>
<td>-0.178</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4a</td>
<td>FIT</td>
<td>2.045</td>
<td>0.107</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4b</td>
<td>FIT</td>
<td>0.436</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5a</td>
<td>ATT</td>
<td>4.917</td>
<td>0.259</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5b</td>
<td>ATT</td>
<td>2.817</td>
<td>0.154</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not rejected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| R² | 0.342 | 0.289 |
| F calculated | 49.371 | 38.678 |

Perceived quality (QUA); Brand familiarity (FAM); Similarity of categories (FIT); Attitude to brand (ATT).
is noticeable that both studies showed that the effects of the extension strategy were regardless of the product category under study and type of extension.

No significant differences were found in the results regarding the type of extended category, nor type of extension. On the other hand, considering the current era of globalisation, managers must be aware of the consequences of global brand extensions, since they may have the same but not necessarily positive effects in different parts of the world. The result of brand dilution after extension has a direct effect on brand equity, which may affect future strategies (HAWKINS et al., 1998).

This article corroborates the power of brand image dilution, but many studies are still required to confirm these results and other questions are also raised about this strategy. The former refers to the reversibility of its results. Would it be possible, with the support of advertising and further explanation about the extended product, to reverse the decline in brand image? Could extension have its effect reduced to the minimum in the long run? These are questions that show that the final result of this study is not definitive and that there may be alternatives for decision makers, besides merely eliminating the brand extension strategy.

The fact that an extension may impair the interest in the category, discussed herein, may indicate that professionals must also be alert to poorly done extensions on brands originating from categories in decline, since the effect may also be detrimental not only to the brand but also to the overall category, curbing its possible future launchings.

The restraints herein derive first from the nature of the method adopted, restricting its external validity. Factors such as reduced information about extended brands, difference between the customer profile and single customer exposure to the extended brand are some of the limitation (KLINK; SMITH, 2001). Although the brands under study were real, their extensions were fictitious, presented in an artificial environment (the respondent would have to imagine the extension).

Future studies may consider the impact of extension on the customer’s choice, evaluating the effects of extension on the sales of that brand and its products, both in traditional and online shopping. The relation between extension and advertising should be made clearer in order to define the possibility of reversing the decline in brand image, besides the long term effects of extension. In relation to the decline in interest in the product category, it should be investigated whether this result was not affected by the fact that both brands under study are closely identified with their own category (AAKER; KELLER, 1990). Studies with more elastic goods, which already have their own identity in other product categories, could achieve a different result. There are many other possible studies on brand extension in Brazil, so that its results can provide a more thorough analysis of the effects of this strategy for brand equity.

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Understanding Consumer Culture: The Role of “Food” as an Important Cultural Category
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ABSTRACT

Food represents, in a symbolic manner, the dominant ways of a given society. Through an analysis of its habits and consumption practices, it is possible to understand a series of meanings associated with the production of identities, the establishment and maintenance of social relationships, and cultural changes in a society. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to identify, through the classification proposed by Arnould and Thompson (2005) regarding different research programs on Consumer Culture Theory (CCT), a group of studies which, in some way, has dealt with the food topic in different contexts associated with consumer culture.

INTRODUCTION

Studies on consumption are not the privilege of a specific area. Several approaches are found in the most distinct knowledge fields, including sociology, anthropology, history, psychology, economics, and business, among others. In the field of marketing, consumption studies find their home in the broad area of consumer behaviour, characterized by having a diverse variety of approaches, ranging from those more oriented by a rational, microeconomic theory-based bias to those with a subjective and interpretive nature, focused on the understanding of symbolic and experiential meanings of consumption. Among the latter are studies related to the cultural issues associated with consumption, the focus of this work.

Every act of consumption represents a cultural act. Even the most trivial consumption events, such as those related to eating, bring along a structure of meanings and practices through which identities and social relationships are formed, maintained, and altered. Within such context, the aim of this paper is to identify, through the classification proposed by Arnould and Thompson (2005) regarding different research programs on Consumer Culture Theory (CCT), a group of studies which, in some way, has dealt with the food topic in different contexts and through different views.

To review food studies through the CCT lens, the method employed consisted in a literature review of different publications from within and without the marketing field. The purpose was not to make and exhaustive survey on a given journal or a certain time period, but an exploratory identification of different possible examples of work illustrating the role the study of “food” may play in our understanding of consumer culture.

Starting with a contextualization regarding the experiential perspective in consumer research, the work initially focuses on the anthropological approach to the subject, and the contribution of the main authors in the field that have devoted themselves to deepen consumption analysis. After that, the subfield of knowledge called consumer culture is presented, by focusing on concepts and underlining the building of this research tradition.

The “food” topic is then introduced, by discussing its role as an important cultural dimension and a genuine locus of study on consumer culture. Lévi-Strauss said that food is good to think about (MACIEL, 2004). Food represents, in a symbolic manner, the dominant ways of a given society. Through the analysis of its habits and consumption practices, it is possible to understand a series of meanings associated with the production of identities, the establishment and maintenance of social relationships, and the cultural changes in a society.

At last, on the basis of the classification proposed by Arnould and Thompson (2005) regarding different research programs on consumer culture, a group of studies is identified which, in some way, has dealt with the “food” topic in different contexts associated with consumer culture. In the end, the results are discussed and a few possible study focuses are proposed, aiming at expanding food comprehension as a determinant variable in cultural issues related to consumption.

THE STUDY OF CONSUMPTION THROUGH AN EXPERIENTIAL PERSPECTIVE IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Along its history, the study of consumer behaviour has been mainly guided—and it may still be today in some schools—by an understanding of the choice processes involved in purchase decisions. This more rational approach became known as the information-processing model. This perspective’s hegemony starts to be called into question in the late 70’s and early 80’s, when Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) offer a more experiential approach, which recognizes the importance of previously neglected variables—the role of emotions on behaviour; the recognition that consumers feel, think, and act; the meaning of symbolism in consumption; the need for pleasure and entertainment; the consumer’s role beyond the purchase act. The experiential perspective is an essentially phenomenological one; it considers consumption as a “primarily subjective state of consciousness, with a variety of symbolic meanings, hedonic responses, and aesthetic criteria” (HOLBROOK and HIRSCHMAN, 1982, p. 132).

Nowadays, even though consumer behaviour research is still strongly oriented by a more positivistic, microeconomic-based perspective, which finds its priorities in the experimental studies and quantitative methods of data analysis (ARNOULD and THOMPSON, 2005), the understanding of consumer culture requires a simultaneously holistic and contextualized analysis, whose natural study context is the field, and not the laboratory. The space for the experiential perspective is thus clear. For investigations with such nature and with such purpose, the contributions of anthropology on consumption are vested with an extreme importance.

THE STUDY OF CONSUMPTION THROUGH AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Only recently has anthropology started to let go of its refusal to examine its own culture. According to McCracken (2003), anthropologists have traditionally turned their attention to the strange and the marginal, missing important opportunities to understand cultural movements in their surroundings and within their very own context. As the interest for material culture awakens, anthropology starts to apply the development of theories of culture, meaning, and symbolism to the reading of consumer behaviour and communication of goods.

In the late 60’s and early 70’s, Baudrillard (1993 and 2007; first editions 1968 and 1971, respectively) writes the books “The System of Objects” and “Consumer Society”. The author deals with consumption as a communication process, in which the objects represent a broad sign system, whose appropriation by the individuals provides them with a language code through which society is presented. The consumer society is then evidenced through the logic of individuals that seek to appropriate signs as a way to
Specifically in the chapter anthropology, particularly in regard to consumer behaviour. The book of Douglas and Isherwood (2006), whose first edition also dates from 1979, represents an important reference in the subject, as a way to generate social meaning to material objects (SAHLINS, 1979).

By the same time, and with a similar approach, Mary Douglas starts to stand out for her anthropological view of consumption. The book of Douglas and Isherwood (2006), whose first edition also dates from 1979, represents an important reference in the subject, and proposes a greater dialogue between economics and anthropology, particularly in regard to consumer behaviour. Specifically in the chapter “The use of Goods”, the authors propose a redefinition of consumption, by stating that it is “the very arena in which culture is the subject of struggles that give it form” (Douglas and Isherwood, 2006, p. 103). For them, it is fundamental to understand that goods are not only necessary to subsistence and competitive exhibition (as approached by Veblen, 1980), but must give visibility and stability to the categories of culture, building meanings and establishing and maintaining social relations.

More recently, comes the work of Colin Campbell (2001; 2006), who also underlines that consumers seek much more in the goods they choose than emulation and a demonstration of wealth, valuing the existence of cultural meanings that allow for the individual to approximate and identify with certain culturally defined groups. In the author’s view, it is through consumption that a great part of the construction of those identities take place.

The existence of important works in anthropology on the topic does not prevent Miller (2002) from arguing that it is necessary to advance in the form of consumer analysis, and argues for deeper analyses that consider the full complexity—illustrated in previous comments on important works in consumer anthropology—and the diversity of motivations and meanings attributed to consumption. Therefore, the study of “consumer culture”—a field of important studies in the area of consumer behaviour—needs an interdisciplinary outlook that will allow for the unveiling and the understanding of such complexity.

CONSUMER CULTURE

Culture represents a key interest in every human science, and provides to understand the organization of people’s experience and action through symbolic means (SAHLINS, 1997). Geertz (1989) refers to culture not as an experimental science in search of laws, but as an interpretive science in search of meaning. It should be expected that the marketing area focusing on studies on consumer culture would turn to anthropology for some guidance on what and how to research. The first author to propose a broader dialogue between those two areas may have been Winick (1961). In the work entitled “Anthropology’s Contributions to Marketing”, Winick states that the subfield of anthropology focused on cultural questions, which studies people’s behaviour within their cultural context, may be the most appropriate terrain for success in such dialogue. However, the first works that effectively showed this relationship were those conducted by Levy (1978; 1981) on the mythologies of food in daily life.

Therefore, consumer culture studies have started to represent an important subfield in consumer behaviour research. Investigations with such nature focus on identifying how the meanings attributed to a given brand or product shape and influence consumer identity, social relations, and market cultures, as well as understanding how such meanings are individually and collectively appropriated and built (THOMPSON and ARSEL, 2004). For Slater (2002), consumer culture represents a condition in which consumption is seen as having the role of increasingly mediating certain aspects of social relations. Consumption has the symbolic ability to represent affiliation to a certain group and its lifestyles, as well as to generate a sense of identity.

As a relevant effort to create an academic brand that would represent and encompass a twenty-year long research tradition on consumer culture, Arnould and Thompson (2005) proposed the Consumer Culture Theory (CCT). According to the authors, CCT “refers to a family of theoretical perspectives that address the dynamic relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace, and cultural meanings” (ARNould and THOMPSON, 2005, p. 868). That is, much more than identifying the existence of a homogeneous culture shared by a certain collectivity, CCT analyzes the diversity of cultural meanings in contemporary society, marked by globalization and the hegemony of capitalism.

With the aim of building such heuristic framework on the various topics, the authors have proposed four broad research categories in CCT: a) consumer identity projects; b) marketplace cultures; c) sociohistoric patterning of consumption; and d) mass-mediated marketplace ideologies and consumers’ interpretive strategies (these categories are explored in a further section of this work).

Among the several cultural categories that might be found in those studies, “food”—for being at the same time something so mundane and extraordinary, so simple and ritualized, so traditional and innovative, and, above all, so present in daily life—definitely represents an important topic for the comprehension of consumer culture.

FOOD AS AN IMPORTANT CULTURAL DIMENSION

The discussion on the cultural meaning of food must start from an understanding of the difference between eating and feeding. For DaMatta (1986), the well-known Brazilian anthropologist,

“… in regard to food, feeding is what a person does to keep alive; eating is what one does with pleasure, according to the most sacred rules of communion and commensality. […] Feeding is universal and general; eating is something that defines a dominion, and puts things in focus” (DaMatta, 1986, p. 55).

That is, the act of eating is used to establish an identity and to define a certain group, class, or person. Much more than a feeding substance, food represents manners, styles, and ways involved in feeding oneself, which define not only what is ingested, but also the one who ingests it (DaMatta, 1986).

Food has always been present in studies from various fields of knowledge. In sociology, Pierre Bourdieu approached the subject of food in his well-know analysis on class distinction, by contrasting food-related practices between the working class and the bourgeoisie. For the former, even with significant restrictions, the ideal would be a plentiful, abundant table, regardless of the combinations made among products; an easy and free style. In contrast, for the bourgeoisie, the emphasis would be on formality, the meal being mainly built as a social rite (Bourdieu, 2000).

In anthropology, classic authors as Mauss, Malinowski, Boas, Levi-Strauss, Elias, Douglas, among others, have dealt—with a
stronger or lesser emphasis—with the topics of feeding and eating, their rituals, and their practices (MINTZ, 2001; MACIEL, 2004). Levi-Strauss, for example, analyzed in different works the way people build their worlds in relation to the practices, rituals, and preferences regarding food (BROWNLEIE et al., 2005; LEVI- STRAUSS, 2006). For the renowned French anthropologist, the act of cooking marks the transition between nature and culture.

In fact, it is not possible to think in anthropology without considering, in some way, the subject of food. Mintz (2001) supports such stance by stating that food and the act of eating have always been topics of interest for anthropology, as there is a direct relationship between food-related behaviour and the meaning we attribute to ourselves and our social identity. The author underlines, in the same vein, that the social implications of the eating act have received much more attention from anthropology than food itself.

Therefore, the prominent role of food is noticeable as an important expression form used with the purpose of communicating something (VALLI and TRAILL, 2005). It shows food as a language, something that expresses a series of social and cultural dimensions. When we choose what to eat, we are “communicating” meanings and projecting identities. “The behaviour relative to food repeatedly reveals the culture in which each of us is inserted” (MINTZ, 2001, p. 2). DaMattà (1986) pointed out that food is one of the most important “languages” through which a given society manifests itself; it represents a social and cultural act that is determined by and determines a series of factors associated with symbolisms, rituals, and representations.

Therefore, food represents a key area of culture; and consequently, a genuine subject of social investigation.

THE ROLE OF FOOD FOR THE UNDERSTANDING OF CONSUMER CULTURE

One of the most important ways by which cultural categories are chosen is through the material objects of a culture (MCCracken, 2003). Thus, if food is understood as a consumer material object, it represents a cultural expression that takes part in the process of objectification by which we create ourselves, our identities, social affiliations, and practices lived in everyday life. Turning to contemporary culinary practices and their representations is an interesting way to enhance our understanding of consumer culture.

Therefore, in order to verify the presence of the food subject in consumer culture studies, this study begins with the previously mentioned classification proposed by Arnould and Thompson (2005) on the distinct research programs in CCT. After a brief description of what each program includes, a few studies are identified in which the “food” topic is present with greater or lesser emphasis as one of the analyzed dimensions.

Consumer identity projects

The appropriation of goods and services in everyday life is an important symbolic mechanism for identity formation. This body of research is based on the assumption that the market represents a rich source of mythical and symbolic resources, through which people seek to build identity narratives, regardless of contradictions, ambivalences, inconsistencies, and instabilities (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). Mediated by the market, consumers choose the identity positions they intend to constitute and represent.

In this line of research, according to everything that has been discussed in this work, the “food” topic should be expected to play a prominent role. The identity issue is key to an analysis of food-related behaviours. In fact, the presence of the topic may be identified in Levy’s (1981) early study on different dimensions of food consumption analyzed through an interpretive structuralistic approach. The author examines the myths found in eating-related stories told by consumers, and argues that such qualitative investigation process goes beyond the findings usually obtained in research with a focus that is limited to the products’ attributes. The emphasis of the work is precisely in understanding small particular and cultural myths related to the products and feeding practices through a qualitative approach.

Jackson et al. (1985), in an analysis of differences between the physiographic characteristics of working women and housewives, identified disparate behaviours and attitudes in regard to food purchase and making, also finding distinct identifications to food and their practices between both groups.

Consumption and the identity-building process comprehend not only the products’ symbolic capacities, but also the way those products are used. In this context appears the study of Bugge and Almas (2006), who studied the way some cultural values are internalized. More specifically, they analyzed how social identities are actively built through the practices involved in the making of a dinner, showing how food habits are able to shape and are shaped by the person.

Marketplace cultures

This research program focuses on an understanding of the emergence of consumption as a dominant human practice that reshapes cultural projects. Also, it attempts to reveal the way consumers “create feelings of social friendliness, and design, distinct, fragmented, self-selected, and transient social worlds through their search for common consumer interests” (Arnould and Thompson, 2005, p. 873). In sum, the body of research contemplated in this program seeks to identify and understand consumer cultures, subcultures, and microcultures.

The “food” topic is also present in this research vein. Fonseca (2005) analyzed the new trend of restaurants known by the designation “Nuevo Latino Cuisine” and its popularity in the USA. The author identified the consolidation process of a brand (Nuevo Latino Cuisine) that attempts to represent a gastronomic experience as a huge spectacle. The feature that provides her study to be included in this research line refers to the consolidation process of the brand, carrying its meanings within certain communities.

Goldstein-Gidoni (2001; 2005), on the other hand, dealt in her studies with the complexity and the dynamics of the cultural categorization of the “Japanese” and the “West” through an analysis of material cultural objects, underlining the role of food in the interaction process between the local and the foreigner.

As an example of the market cultures characterized by an opposition to the hegemonic, and in a way near the context of feeding, is the work of Thompson and Arsel (2004), who attempted to investigate the consumer practices of “cabinet planteurs,” coffee-shop lovers who prefer the local shops as an opposition to the imposition of large chains as Starbucks. That is, an analysis of the market culture based on the study of one of the most common feeding practices—choosing a place to have a cup of coffee.

The sociohistoric patterning of consumption

Studies included in this line of CCT research have focused on institutional and social structures that systematically influence and shape consumption (class, community, ethnicity, and gender, for example). Their objective is to examine what a consumer society is and how it is constituted and maintained. The identification of how brand communities employ traditional community symbols and how ethnic identities are built and rebuilt in different contexts is among the main foci of investigation (Arnould and Thompson, 2005).
changes in cultural components (LAROCHE et al., 1999). For
changes in cultural components (LAROCHE et al., 1999). For
Verbeke and López (2005), ethnic identity relates to the retention
or loss of behaviours and attitudes from a person’s culture of origin.
It refers not only to the inherent features of a racial group, but also
to the process of identification with a group whose members use
ethnic labels that affect the perceptive, cognitive, affective, and
knowledge structure for their own definition.

Along with the retention of language, feeding habits are
among the most recognized dimensions of a given ethnic identity.
The analysis of immigrant consumer experiences usually deals,
though not necessarily as a central topic, with the maintenance,
creation, and/or transformation of feeding practices, food-making
procedures, and product preferences (PEÑALOSA, 1994). This
subject has motivated a series of food-related consumer culture
studies. Laroche et al. (1999) examined the relationship between
ethnic identity and food consumption patterns in Italian immigrants—and
descendants—finding, on one hand, a greater preference for
traditional dishes from their culture, and on the other, a stronger
rejection by such public to convenience products. However, the
study of Verbeke and López (2005) found receptivity to ethnic food
in one society (Belgic), underlining that the main factors responsible
for such acceptance are personal interest and the circle of friends.
Jamal (1986) examined the way people negotiate culturally
consituted differences that occur as a result of distinctions between
experiential practices of traditional and contemporary food
consumption. Through an analysis of the ethnic food consumption
behaviour among the English, the author explored the various
meanings attributed to this kind of food by the natives. Cervellon
and Dubé (2005), in a cross-cultural study on cultural influences
relative to food, found that the French behave more on a dominant
affective basis, whereas the Chinese balance feeling and cognition
in their food choices. The study also pointed out that dishes that are
traditionally made according to the culture of origin always find
greater acceptance and preference in acculturation processes.

Other studies on sociohistoric patterning of consumption may
also be mentioned. The work of Reilly and Wallendorf (1987)
found that regional proximity and a minority status are the forces
causing the strongest impact on food consumption (other forces
examined included national identity, ethnicity, and income). Food
culture is seen by Valli and Traill (2005) as a culinary order whose
traits are permanent within a certain group of people, from the micro
(family) to the macro (social classes, regions, countries) level.
Pettigrew and Charters (2006) examined the perceived relationships
between food and two of the most important alcoholic beverage
types—wine and beer—underlining that, whereas the former acts as
to give value to food and vice-versa, the latter has the opposite
effect, and, when beer is drunk, the food acts only as a complement.
Khare and Inman (2006) studied the nature of habits relative to
the consumption of nutritious food, and concluded that the existence
of habits, whether of a more cultural and enduring nature or even more
context-dependent ones, provides a more efficient management of
cognitive resources.

Coupland (2005), through an ethnographic study, examined
the appropriation process of consumers for common and worldly-
minded brands—called by the author as “invisible”—on the basis of
familiar habits and daily home practices. The interesting part in
the findings of that study is the small relationship between the choices
of those brands and aspects as brand subcultures, brand communities,
brand loyalty—subjects that are traditionally studied in this field of
investigation. In the specific case of brands considered common,
the consumer cannot capture their meanings; he or she only
appropriates them as part of the domestic system as a function of
pre-established social patterns.

Mass-mediated marketplace ideologies and consumer
interpretive strategies
This fourth body of CCT research focuses on understanding
consumer ideologies, seen as meaning systems that tend to channel
and reproduce consumers’ thoughts and actions as to advocate
dominant interests in society. This includes the identification of
different forms through which the capitalist cultural production
systems “invite” consumers to ambitiously pursue certain identities
and lifestyles (ARNould and THOMPSON, 2005). More
specifically, it seeks to identify, through an analysis of popular texts
(ads, TV programs, and movies, for example) and actions in
servicescapes, the symbolic meanings, the cultural ideals, and the
ideological styles encoded in them. Which messages are transmitted
by the commercial media about consumption, and how consumers
give meaning and reply to those messages are questions that guide
this research program.

The “food” topic also appears in an article by Jones and Taylor
(2001), who examined texts written and published on gastronomy
and culture. That study focused on two important works on the
topic, and its findings point to the valuing of authenticity in the
culinary art and the preservation of original flavours, as opposed to
the advancement of modern food production techniques. In the
same vein, Brownlie et al. (2005) went to the culinary books to
examine the meanings associated with food preparation, presentation,
and consumption, finding in the process an interesting way to
understand and problematize representations of contemporary
culture.

Also based on gastronomy books, Martin (2005), in an
interesting piece of work on food, literature, and art, examined the
role of certain cultural artefacts (in this case, books on the subject),
as vehicles that encourage a challenge to the “I/other” dichotomy.
Based on an extensive analysis of important books on food, the
author explores the thesis of philosopher Deane Curtin on the
centrality of food for the process of rethinking the bases of human
identity and autonomy. Once food is ingested, it becomes part of the
self, forcing people to reconceptualize not only the other (the food),
but also such permeable identity, to the point of physically
incorporating the other.

Brewis and Jack (2005), however, studied the contents of
advertisement for fast food restaurants in England, finding that the
campaigns seek, on one hand, to rescue the best things from the past
(encouraging pleasure and nostalgia through food) and, on the
other, to show the convenience and agility of today’s services. More
specifically, their article focuses on the importance of the “time”
dimension in people’s lives, and mainly on their practices and
preferences regarding food consumption.

CONCLUSION
The subfield of consumer behaviour known as CCT constitutes
an area of increasing repercussion and an extremely fertile field for
more transdisciplinary approaches focused on understanding
consumer culture. Starting from different, but complementary,
perspectives on consumption, this work has sought to explore the
role of “food” as an important cultural category and a promising
dimension of analysis on the consumption phenomenon.

Nothing has more of an everyday nature than the feeding
habits of people or a given community. Food represents people’s
guarantee of survival. It is responsible for fulfilling the most basic
needs of the human being. However, as stated by Montanari (2003),
food is also pleasure, and between these two poles a difficult and
complex history unfolds, though a central history, intrinsically
related to other histories, which food determines and is by them determined.

It is exactly through the study of the most trivial practices of consumption (of objects also trivial) that a broader understanding of a social culture and its mediators is made possible. Therefore, the analysis of food’s role—seemingly so trivial—in the construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction of consumer culture is presented as an important and instigating field of investigation, as it was possible to verify through the studies presented.

The results show a significant number of studies dealing with food in different perspectives, contexts and fields. From publications in the area of consumer behaviour (ie. Journal of Consumer Research and Consumption, Markets and Culture) to more industry-identified journals (ie. British Food Journal), it was possible to verify the role of food in representing and illustrating an important facet of consumer culture in contemporary societies. Examples of studies related to consumer identity projects and marketplace cultures, and specially to sociohistoric patterning of consumption and mass-mediated marketplace ideologies and consumer interpretive strategies were presented and commented. It was found that the classification proposed by Arnould and Thompson (2005) represents an appropriate framework to encompass a considerable diversity of food studies, regardless of the methodology employed or the environment studied. It was also seen that the omnipresent nature of the topic in consumer’s life suggests a greater inter-relationship among the various categories. For instance, rare is the study dealing with the existence of certain market cultures associated to food that will not illustrate, in some way, an important evidence of certain sociohistoric patterns on such type of consumption.

Another important outcome from this work refers to the finding that, in spite of distinct food studies being absolutely permeated by a cultural approach on the analysis of consumption and its practices, few works use the views from anthropology to further the interpretation of their findings. Considering the rich history of such knowledge field on food studies—as exemplified throughout this paper—an engaging opportunity is seen for seeking a more interpretive and symbolic outlook on this topic in the area of consumer behavior.

As further actions, there is an opportunity for deepening the studies on consumer culture through an analysis of food consumption and related practices. In this vein, some possible study foci would be:

- examining the constitution of communities formed around certain consumer experiences with different products and food establishments;
- examining codes found and instituted in the growing number of TV programs on gastronomy, as well as their impact on the construction and reconfiguration of consumer identities (only the Brazilian cable TV GNT network currently has five gastronomy-related shows);
- investigating the acculturation processes of Brazilian people—so passionate they are about their food—in face of new cultural contexts and their food products, practices, and rituals;
- examining the growing interest of the population in practicing gastronomy and the impact of such process on identity projection.

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Men’s Fashion and the Consumption of Clothes
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ABSTRACT
How do men deal with their masculinities through fashion clothing? How do they deal with fashion clothing through their masculinities? Conducting eight in-depth interviews with males aged between 23 and 40 years, this paper tried to explore such questions through an investigation of men’s decision processes when the consumption of fashion is involved. Three groups were discerned through the analysis of the interviews: “anti-fashion male”, “singular male” and “grooming male”. It was observed that different models of masculinity may be reinforced by not only the ways that men dress, but also the ways that men buy their clothes.

INTRODUCTION
To each society, an ideal of masculinity; to each ideal of masculinity, a body (Dutra, J. L. 2002). The construction of personal appearance is bound up with cultural and historical specifics. In this context, fashion has been mentioned in literature as a privileged tool for such construction (Dutra, J. L. 2002; Frith and Gleson, 2004). Although non-verbal, the communication of clothing has a powerful semiotic potential (McCracken, 2003). According to Thompson and Haytko (1997), consumers use the reflection on fashion to create social distinctions, construct narratives of their personal history, interpret the interpersonal dynamics of their social spheres, understand their relations with consumer culture, and transform conventional social categories. Gender may be a particularly important case of a category constructed, reinforced or contested through the reflection on fashion.

This study specifically focuses on masculine gender and tries to explore how men, through issues related to their masculinities, consume or do not consume fashion (fashion refers to articles of clothing here).

Since the 19th century, fashion has been more present and lived in the feminine sphere (Lipovetsky, G., 1989; Dutra, J. L. 2002). It does not mean that men were indifferent to their appearance, but rather that masculine qualities such as status, strength, virility and business success were a constituent part of appearance. Nowadays, however, some authors argue that men also seem to be increasingly focusing on the explicit formation of their image. This has been observed in different cultures and in different contexts. For example, in the United States, the concept of the “new man” that arose in the 1980s is part of a redefinition of men’s identity. The version of the “new man” shaped by the mass media places the body at the center of identity and sexuality, with appearance becoming vital to this construction of masculinity.

Nevertheless, values do not change all of a sudden, but rather new values coexist with traditional ones. The values of a culture tend to change slowly, affecting individuals and groups in different ways (Hawkins et al., 1998). Consequently, new ideals of masculinity seem to coexist with traditional ones. Dutra (2002), for instance, defended the viewpoint that the question “Did they have clothes for men where you bought those?” a joke that is still common in male circles, seeks precisely to embarrass the person involved by highlighting the ambiguous sexual information transmitted by the inappropriateness of his clothes. The anthropologist suggested that such embarrassments are symptoms of a society which encourages plurality, while at the same time elects “a” new model and what is considered to be deviant.

Therefore, this is a complex issue. The traditional ideal model of masculinity has been questioned as new kinds of male identities have been offered with the focus on the aesthetic paradigm. However, there appears to be a conflict: maintaining the virile identity, in which the ideal of masculinity is linked to a sober and austere bourgeois aesthetic; or adhere to contemporary trends in which there is a valuation of the aesthetic of body and fashion (Coutinho, 2004).

This article seeks to explore the following key questions: How do men deal with their masculinity through fashion clothing? How do they deal with fashion clothing through their masculinity?

If a series of social changes have occurred, then new self concepts and lifestyles have emerged. The proposal of this research is therefore: if it is true that there is not just one model of masculinity, but a plurality of models, then there will not be just one way that men consume fashion, but a plurality of ways. Hence, the purpose of this article is to address those key questions above both by exploring the male’s decision processes, when the consumption of clothing is involved, and by investigating some issues related to their masculinities in these processes.

Understanding male behavior in fashion consumption is a relatively unexplored topic which deserves attention in consumer research, since it may provide important insights into how consumption is related to gender identity construction and expression.

MALE IDENTITY AT THE CROSSROADS
Studies of the male consumer were fairly scarce until the 1990s. The exclusion of the subject from the social sciences may have occurred due to the traditional dichotomy of seeing women as consumers and men as producers (Galilee, 2002). The belief that consumption activity was restricted to the female domain was linked to traditional conjugal roles at the heart of the nuclear family: men were the providers, the producers; women stayed at home, catering to family needs, and were therefore the consumers (Ottnes & McGrath, 2001; Galilee, 2002).

The growth in male consumption and the invention of labels such as the “new man” is related to the changes in the labor market that occurred in the developed western countries during the 1970s and 1980s. Such changes are associated with post modernity, the advances of feminism and the introduction of new technologies (Galilee, 2002). With the growth of the feminist movement, women began to claim rights that had hitherto been the preserve of men, demanding autonomy, equality in the labor market and in the division of domestic chores. Additionally, the homosexual movement began to demand that their sexual practices no longer be regarded as pathological. Both movements discussed their position in society and their causes gained visibility by questioning the traditional model of masculinity and patriarchal relations (Sant’anna, 2002).

Hence, with all these upheavals in the symbolic world, men began to relativize their own ideal of masculinity and consequently the extreme differentiation of sexes. If in the past there were clearly marked points of reference defining the nature of male identity, that is, men as producers, providers and protectors, it seems that today, in a world where the concept of plurality predominates, it is very difficult to consider only a single model of masculinity.

According to Sant’anna (2002), there is a rereading of the masculine and feminine, whose values have not been abandoned, but rather updated and confirmed in another way. The author is referring precisely to a more plural and varied way of choosing and manipulating gender categories.
Pinheiro (1999) reveals that post-modern subjectivities have to be permanently creating their internal references, beliefs and models. That is as if currently one must create all identity references internally without being able to count on the support of external references that have become excessively unstable.

Nowadays, consumption may act as an important agent in the creation of meanings, including those meanings related to the identity construction (Holt and Thompson, 2004, Belk, 1988). Holt and Thompson (2004), for the sake of illustration, observed how men construct themselves as masculine through their everyday consumption. They observed that the most potent masculine model in American culture is neither the breadwinner nor the rebel, but their fusion. The “man-of-action hero” ideal, as they called, blends the rebel’s individual initiative and unwillingness to conform to the *status quo* with the breadwinner’s care for the commonweal and sense of responsibility.

Nevertheless, there are still few studies that address specifically to the relations between men and clothing consumption behavior. Some of them are shown below.

**SOME RESEARCH INTO MALES CONSUMPTION OF FASHION**

Gender differences regarding the world of fashion are consistent with the socialization process of men and women in American consumer culture: from the continuing conception of femininity handed down from generation to generation to the mass media representations and the material influences during socialization (e.g. Barbie dolls), physical appearance and femininity have been unceasingly associated in the practices of consumer culture (Thompson & Haytko, 1997).

According to Bakewell *et al.* (2006), in their study carried out in the United Kingdom, a relatively high consciousness of fashion was observed in “Generation Y” men. However, this high consciousness did not necessarily translate into the adoption of fashion. In reality, the existence of a strong public-gender consciousness did not necessarily translate into the adoption of fashion. This research also proposed that conservativeness in fashion may be representing an attempt to avoid inadequacy regarding gender roles. Thompson & Haytko (1997) revealed that an “anti-fashion” posture is very much associated to the link made between fashion and materialism, class differentiation, and conformity. In other words, the rejection of fashion is a sign of moral virtues, such as seriousness of purpose and sensibleness.

Gold and Stern (1989) suggested that fashion-conscious women tend to focus more on their external appearance, as reflected in the positive relation between fashion consciousness and what the authors called “public self-consciousness”. Such a public consciousness seems to function as a psychographic description of who these women are. Men, on the other hand, focus more on what they are, as reflected in the positive relation between fashion consciousness and “private-gender consciousness” (the extent to which each individual is conscious of his gender). This relation supposedly indicates that these men connect fashion with their identity and their internalized masculinity (their concepts of what it means to be a man).

Similarly, Cox and Dittmar (1995) observed that men use clothes in a more self-oriented way, emphasizing the functional benefits of clothes and their use as expressive symbols of their personality. Women, on the other hand, also have an outwardly directed concern, choosing their clothes as a symbol of their social interrelations with others.

Defying the notion that men invest little in their appearance, the participants in Frith and Gleeson’s (2004) research seem to use clothes strategically to manipulate their appearances and correspond to cultural ideals of masculinity. Men in this study were shown varying the color, pattern, fit and size of clothes to look slimmer, bigger or muscular. According Frith and Gleeson (2004), the use of clothing is part of a daily practice of body modification, which is not as dramatic as plastic surgery or exercises, but requires knowledge, attention and money.

**METHODOLOGY**

In order to explore how men deal with their masculinity through fashion and how they deal with fashion through their masculinity, this research undertook a survey, in which eight in-depth interviews were conducted with men residents in the city of Rio de Janeiro. This group of eight individuals was accessed for convenience. It was asked different masters’ students in business administration of a private university in Rio de Janeiro to indicate an acquaintance who could be a participant of our research. The researchers have sought to include in the study males with different occupations so as to enclose a variety of lifestyles and, consequently, clothing behaviors. On the other hand, their age range was limited to those aged between 20 and 40 years. This range was chosen due to the fact that men who are these ages lived significant part of their socialization process (childhood and teenage) in the 1980’s and the 1990’s, decades when the emphasis on the aesthetical paradigm started to gain relevance in the masculine construction.

All those interviewed were middle class and most lived in the South Zone, the noblest part of the city. The participants’ ages and occupation are listed in Table 1.

The interviews were undertaken in the interviewer’s home. All participants were assured anonymity. Lasting on average 45 minutes, all interviews were recorded and transcribed.

The interview script was divided into two parts. Firstly, it has tried to explore and describe the different kinds of male’s decision process related to clothing purchases. For this purpose, the questions in this part of the script were based on the decision process model presented by Engel *et al.* (2000), considering the following aspects: (1) need recognition; (2) search for information; (3) evaluation of purchase alternatives. As observed, only the pre-purchase aspects were considered relevant, since the focus was on what motivates purchases, on the interest in clothing issues, and on the attributes valued when a clothing article is to be selected.

Secondly, the interview script was concerned with how masculinities issues may be expressed through their relationship with (and their discourse about) fashion. For this purpose, there were topics in the interview script particularly useful to encourage a direct reflection on masculinity and clothing behaviors. Trying to favor the fluidity of their discourses, some questions were formulated in the third person. For instance, there was a topic where the interviewer asked for two sentences to be completed: (1) “When a man goes out to buy clothes, he…” and (2) “A man never buys…”. Questions regarding the role of clothing in the formation of a person’s image and in the interpersonal relations were also explored in this part of the interview script. However, it is important to highlight that the existence of a previous script did not exclude the conversational quality of the interview, which had its dialogue largely set by the participants.

Regarding the analysis of the interviews, the researchers took the existential-phenomenology method of interpretation, which considers the hermeneutical circles and global themes (see Thompson *et al.*, 1989). The hermeneutical circles refer to a part-to-whole reading strategy by which the researchers seek an individual understanding of each interview, while trying to relate separate passages.
ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEWS

The analysis of the interviews suggests that the decision process styles used by men are not in fact univocal. Important similarities and differences appeared in the narratives of many of the interviewees. It was thus convenient to group them in accordance with some similarities to facilitate the analysis of the decision processes.

One central mediator for the analysis related to the decision processes was the observation of the respondents’ level of involvement with clothing. The importance of these levels in shaping the decision processes is recognized in literature. Engel et al. (2000) stated that the degree of personal involvement is the most important factor that influences the type of decision process behavior that follows. Involvement, according to the authors, is the degree of perceived personal importance of a product or service in a specific context.

Three kinds of decision processes observed in the male’s discourse are presented below. These groups are not an exhaustive description of the men’s consumption of fashion phenomenon, but represent an effort to capture figural aspects that emerged from the male’s experiences.

Anti-fashion male:

Two of the eight interviewees were classified in this group. The anti-fashion males have demonstrated a low level of involvement with clothing. They were the shortest interviews, reflecting their lack of enthusiasm for the subject. They said that they do not like to buy clothes. In their narratives, words that expressed the unpleasant sensation (such as “torture”) when they were shopping for clothes commonly appeared.

“I find it pure torture (shopping for clothes)... Well, it’s such a hassle! When I go into a shop and someone comes up to me, I feel awful. I don’t want anyone to speak to me. When I go to the Rio Sul (a mall), for example, I always find it so crowded. That makes me feel uncomfortable.” (28, economist)

In regard to the need recognition, these interviewees only shop when they really need to. Their view is purely utilitarian: the need appears merely when they have to replace old items of clothing that are “unusable”.

“I only shop when I need something. It’s very sporadic... If I need to buy some socks, I go and buy some socks, if I need to buy sneakers, if my sneakers get torn, I go and buy another pair. I buy when the things I have no longer fit or when they’re really old.” (28, economist)

With respect to the search for information, the sources reported were merely the point of sale. Moreover, they seem to limit themselves to the brands they know so as not to have to go to trouble in their quest:

“There are two or three shops, at the most, that I go to whenever I need some clothes. There, I know that I’ll find what I’m looking for, so I won’t have to go to umpteen shops and spend ages looking around.” (31, engineer)

As for the evaluation of the purchase alternatives, the price was considered to be important, but seemed to be an attribute of secondary relevance. The replies indicated that the most important factor is the clothes’ style.

The maleness in this group seems to be associated with the utilitarian view, in which being a man means to be objective, as the aesthetic concerns was considered to be futile. This observation is in accordance with what Thompson and Haytko (1997) noticed about the anti-fashion dimension: the rejection of fashion may be a sign of seriousness of purpose.

Singular male:

Four interviewees were grouped here. This group was relatively heterogeneous and demonstrated some traits of low involvement and others of high involvement. For instance, the interviewees reported the following behaviors: when they go shopping, they already seem to have something in mind and don’t deviate from what they had planned beforehand; they may spend longer in the shop trying on clothes so as not to have to return and change them; they may buy more than one item at a time not to have to go back to the mall to buy more.

A position contrary to uniformization or conformity regarding fashion was strongly underscored here. The fear of appearing to be “fashion victims”, just because they are speaking of their relations with clothes and consumption, permeated their discourses. In this

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Graphic Designer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Travel Agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Economist</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Body-piercer</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>31</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Master’s Student in Administration</td>
</tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Travel Agent</td>
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context, the term “fashion” seems to be very much associated with what everyone is wearing exclusively because it is in evidence and not because it expresses the person’s individuality. Women and the “average man”, as one of them labeled, follow the mass, not them:

“I’ve always had my style. I’ve had this style for nine years now, because I don’t change it all that much, you know? (…) I’m not so attracted, as I sometimes see… Sort of, a new boot comes out, or a new style, and all women begin to wear it. Something different appears and everyone wears it. I think I’ve hardly changed at all.” (23, designer)

“(…) many people don’t have any style at all and just wear what’s in the shop window, what’s on show, don’t choose their own thing. I don’t wear just any average thing; I choose something I really like. (…) If a person doesn’t have his own style, then he’s not fashionable. Although he is wearing things that are fashionable, right?” (30, lawyer)

Attaching such importance to a personal style may be related to the fact that these subjects believe that clothes communicate their personality and lifestyle, which may also influence the creation of relationships:

“When you don’t know someone, you analyze the person by his clothes. Sometimes, you get it wrong, sometimes you’re right, but you can get an idea of what a person likes, the places he goes to, you can get an idea of the person’s personality. The first impression you have of a person is through their image, and the image is provided by their clothes.” (28, body-piercer)

“They (clothes) communicate a person’s image, as if it was a product, packaging. It communicates my style. I reckon that we communicate our personality. As I’m a little more laid back, more informal, young, so I try to wear something younger, more relaxed. I don’t like very formal situations, so it’s my personality that I end up transmitting through my clothes. (…) And we judge people by their appearance, right?” (23, designer)

Regarding the need recognition, the replies ranged from merely utilitarian needs to some indications that purchases are made when there is some spare cash or when their clothes are worn out or old, making them look “disheveled”.

As for the search for information, the interviewees also said that they do not read magazines. They said that they like to hear or ask for other people’s opinions, preferring to go shopping with someone else (their girlfriends mainly). They also revealed that they are informed by what they observe in shop windows. Nevertheless, only one of the eight interviewees said that he buys on impulse.

Finally, regarding the assessment of purchase alternatives, price seems to have been considered an important attribute, but so was style, quality, cut and brand. However, they emphasized and reemphasized that they only buy brands because they are references for quality, not because they are in evidence.

“For me what counts more is not the label, it’s if the clothe fit well. If the cut is ok and it’s from Renner (a department store) that’s fine. If the cut is horrible and it’s from Zappo, I hate it. The problem is that the more expensive labels, end up being the labels (…) that fit better.” (30, lawyer)

**Grooming male:**

Two of the interviewees were classified in this group, which has shown a high involvement level with fashion and appearance in general. Besides being the longest interviews, they were the only two participants that said they preferred to shop on their own, because they may spend a long time window shopping, “eyeing up the clothes” or trying on them:

“Like going on my own, because I’m quite capable of spending two hours in a shop. I don’t shop very often… but when I do, it’s to make a big purchase. I try on a pile of clothes, one by one, look at everything, if I don’t like anything I go to another shop, and then decide whether or not to go back to that one. That’s it.” (35, master’s student in administration)

When it comes to the need recognition, they showed that clothes for them are more than just utilitarian. The pleasures that they take in the activity and the hedonism involved seem to be an important motivation for the outing:

“I’m quite vain, I like buying clothes a lot, arriving home, wearing the clothes for the first time. I love it, and it gives me a lot of pleasure!” (40, travel agent)

The maleness here is not contrary to appearance concerns. On the contrary, appearance has a central role in their model of masculinity. However, it seems that fashion is much used to create a good impression or to gain more respect, what could be related to the traditional model of masculinity:

“When I lived in São Paulo, I had a top position. I was a director at the age of 30, so I used to wear a suit and tie. It was important for me to dress well both to be on equal terms with other people in my position, and to have a suitable posture in relation to those in lower positions. When I used to go out in those circles, I dressed up neatly and asked my wife to do the same.” (35, master’s student in administration)

With respect to the search for information, they also recounted a lack of interest in any kind of magazine that deals with fashion. On the other hand, the interviewees said that they are keen observers of daily life, looking at shop windows and the fashion other men dress:

“As my work takes me out of the office a lot, I always look at many shop windows. I think that this is the main vehicle, everything in shop windows looks more beautiful, it’s what is currently in. I observe a lot. (…) if I see a friend of mine with a cool pair of sneakers: “Wow, those sneakers are cool”. People end up influencing each other.” (40, travel agent)

Regarding the alternatives evaluation, the interviewees openly showed that they had favorite labels and stores. According to their narratives, their choices are related to quality, design, cut and comfort.

**General Considerations:**

Withdrawing the observation lens by group and returning to the general approach, each subject seems to have used the interview, whose main theme was his relation with clothes and the consumption of fashion, to reflect on some issues such as the differentiation of sexes, and gender and body identity.
Though classic male values such as the working, strong, objective and determined man arose constantly, a concern with the explicit formation of their self-image was present in most of the male discourses. Most of them manipulate the use of clothes, varying the fit and size of clothes to feel better in relation to the contemporary standard of male beauty.

However, the fear of jeopardizing their masculinity was manifested. Four of the interviewees said that they did not like contemporary standard of male beauty.

The grooming activity does not necessarily mean a man has to dress like a man

Such discourse and the following one reflect the extent to which the concept of masculinity is established in opposition to that of homosexuality or femininity:

“Interviewer: What kind of article of clothing would you never wear?”
“Subject: A tight-fitting shirt, clinging to the body. (...) I think they’re ugly, sort of thing a faggot would wear. I find them tacky: for a faggot or samba singer. Can I say these politically incorrect things? (laughter) Don’t get me wrong, but they’re horrible, not for me.” (28, body-piercer)

Such discourse and the following one reflect the extent to which the concept of masculinity is established in opposition to that of homosexuality or femininity:

“A man has to dress like a man. A woman who has a job, an executive, draws a little on a mannish style. But a man who wears clothes that are a little womanish, something prettier with a different design. I don’t think that’s very appropriate, it’s not manly. Designs with a very low neckline, with a skewed collar... (...) I like a basic style, but some people like something that isn’t very conventional. I can even appreciate this, the guy has his own style, but I would feel rather strange wearing it.” (40, travel agent)

This was a passage from one of the “grooming males”, which shows that the grooming activity does not necessarily mean a relativization of the traditional masculine values. Again: “A man has to dress like a man”. In this context, man seems to be associated with sobriety.

For the sake of illustration, a preference for more discrete colors and conventional forms was repeatedly expressed. In some way, deviate from the mainstream seems risky. One of the participants commented that people regard him as “hippyish” precisely because his style is different from that of the “average man”:

“A friend recently made this joke (“did they have men’s shirts where you bought yours?”) regarding a shirt of mine. The shirt is cool. I suppose that it’s more colorful than one that an average man would wear. It’s enough not to be the same as everyone else for people to become defensive. Men are put on the defensive, they are afraid.” (30, lawyer)

When it comes to the topic in the interview script that asked for two sentences to be completed (“When a man goes out to buy clothes, he...” and “A man never buys...”), the replies were diverse. Regarding the first sentence, some showed impatience and total displeasure with the purchasing situation, while others showed just how much men are “prudent”, objective and concerned with the monetary factor. Others showed a concern with a good image:

When a man goes out shopping for clothes, he ...
“He wants to get it over with as fast as possible.” (28, economist)

“Buys what he should without exaggerating. He buys what he can afford, right? Even if he is tempted by something. A woman says: “Wow, but that blouse is also cool!” and there she goes. A man is more restrained.” (40, travel agent)

“(...) wants to look good, presents a positive image of himself to other people, wants to buy nice new clothes that gives him an agreeable appearance.” (28, body-piercer)

The second sentence to be completed seems to have created some difficulties and resistances. This was the point they thought most about before proffering a verbal reply. Curiously, two interviewees cited jewelry:

A man never buys...
“Look, that’s a difficult one because nowadays there isn’t such a big difference. (...)I think that a real man never buys jewelry. (...) But that’s my prejudice. But bracelets and collars for men, I really don’t like that.” (23, designer)
“A man never buys? I’m rather consumerist, I think that a man never buys... Some jewelry for himself. But, well, I think that nowadays a man probably does, yes. I am going to contest this sentence! (laughter).” (40, travel agent)

It seems that they were hesitant to show their prejudiced or, maybe, their conservative side. The replies of most participants pointed to some lack of differentiation between female and male clothing. But if one reexamines their discourses during the course of the interviews, one arrives at the same conclusion as Dutra’s (2002) regarding the signs of the masculine: “everything is allowed and at the same time something is improper”. (p. 408).

**FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Different masculinities consume fashion clothing in different ways. It seems that different masculinities may be reinforced by not only the way men dress, but also the way they buy clothes: each of the participants, in his own way, showed that not only what they consume, but also how and how much they consume may be related to their concepts of masculinity. For instance, there are those who admit to be vain, openly consumerist, mindful of aesthetics, clothes and beauty. Although these characterizations may seem rather distant from the ideal standard of masculinity, it is clear that they clearly correspond to their own ideal standards. Being well-dressed may enable them to gain respect, that is, it may connote seriousness and bearing, which allows them to find traditional ideals of masculinity again.

As observed by Dutra (2002), it still seems that one of the most important impediments that these men find in adhering to fashion is the fear of putting the traditionally and socially required model of masculinity in danger. Although some participants tried to express a movement towards a relativism of masculine signs, their discourses upon fashion consumption throughout the conversation showed that they try to deviate from what could be considered deviant (here, the feminine and, specially, the homosexual). Possibly, if the researcher was also a male, this and other important issues could be more evident or expressed with less resistance. This factor may be considered as one limitation of the present research. However, the resistance somewhat communicates and has its relevance.

Given the exploratory and qualitative nature of this research, the results are not conclusive and no generalization should be made from them. What is essential to notice is: as observable changes in consumption behavior are correlated with changes in cultural ideals and values, it is fundamental to heed the new ideals, bearing in mind that they do not replace the traditional ones but coexist with them. Following this path, marketing and retail professionals can create more effective strategies to communicate with, and relate to, this vast and plural segment: men.
REFERENCES


ABSTRACT

The main aim of this article is to analyze the associative relationship between values, benefits and attributes as perceived by female consumers of luxury fragrances who reside in the city of Curitiba in Brazil. To achieve this, the Means-End Chain model was used, operationalized by the Association Pattern Technique (APT). Furthermore, to broaden the understanding of the phenomenon, segmentation was performed to determine the attitudes of the interviewees concerning the consumption of luxury goods. Three groups emerged: dreamers, skeptics and connoisseurs, with different categorization, selection and consumption processes of luxury fragrances.

INTRODUCTION

Studies of luxury consumption first took place in the late nineteenth century, of which the most prominent are the works of Veblen (Dubois, Laurent and Czellar 2001), who coined the term “conspicuous consumption” to show that the quantitative or qualitative choices of an individual are indicators of social stratification or segregation. When it comes to consumer behavior, luxury goods are probably the most representative of all the complexity of a buying process as they simultaneously involve rational factors such as quality and originality and irrational factors such as striving for distinction, a taste for brand names and social codes (Allérés 2000).

The luxury market has reinvented itself in recent decades by incorporating more accessible products than before, albeit in a limited way in comparison with conventional products (Nueno and Quelch 1998; Vigneron and Johnson 2004). It is estimated that in 2006 the luxury sector on a worldwide basis took in around US$157 billion, spurred by the large scale consumption of items such as fragrances, cosmetics, pens, scarves, wine and other distilled drinks (Thomas 2007). In Brazil, the sector registered growth levels of up to 35% a year from 2000 to 2005, placing the country among the top ten global consumers of luxury goods (Sônego 2006).

The aim of this study is to understand luxury consumption in one of its most accessible segments, fragrances, by utilizing the Means-End Chain model (Gutman 1982), i.e., reporting the attributes, benefits and personal values of the respondents. With a view to broadening the understanding of the phenomenon, an effort was made to identify the attitude of these consumers concerning the consumption of luxury goods and services in accordance with the methodology of Dubois, Laurent and Czellar (2001) and proposed segmentation based on the attitudes identified by using a Latent Class Model.

CONSUMER RELATIONSHIPS WITH LUXURY

Allérés (2000) points out four fundamental dimensions for luxury products: the functional dimension (concerning the utility of the product itself), the cultural dimension (concerning the history of the product or its creator), the symbolic dimension (hedonism and narcissism resulting from consumption of the product) and the social dimension (as seen from the desires either to stand out from the crowd or to feel part of the group).

In 2001, Dubois, Laurent and Czellar published a study entitled “Consumer Rapport to Luxury: Analyzing Complex and Ambivalent Attitudes”. The study was conducted in two stages: the first was of a qualitative nature to identify the different attitudes of the consumer; the second, of a quantitative nature, was applied to an international sample made up of 1,848 business administration students in twenty European, Asian and North American countries. Among the numerous views and commentaries contained in the qualitative interviews, the authors highlighted six facets pertaining to luxury products: excellent quality, very high price, scarcity and uniqueness, aesthetics and polysensuality, ancestral heritage and personal history and superfluousness.

The authors detected three types of attitudes on the part of the respondents which they described as elitism, democratization and distance. Elitism and democratization are positive attitudes to luxury, albeit contradictory. The first group (elitism) believed that access to luxury should be restricted and that people required refined taste and education in order to appreciate it. To these people, the word luxury was synonymous to good taste and should not be mass produced and widely distributed. Meanwhile, the second group (democratization), as the name indicates, were in favor of the concept of accessible luxury, available to the general public. The attitudes of the ‘distance’ group were not particularly negative to luxury, but these respondents believed that luxury lay outside of their world and were in favor of its replicas, although at the same time they claimed they felt comfortable buying and using luxury items.

THE MEANS-END CHAIN MODEL

Gutman (1982) suggested that consumer behavior may be represented by an association between the end result sought by an individual when he consumes something and the means that he used to achieve this result. Therefore, the author developed the Means-End Chain Model (MEC) based on two basic premises of human behavior: (1) that values, defined as “desired states of being” play a fundamental role in forming choice patterns and (2) that people tend to deal with a huge diversity of products (potential agents of satisfaction and their values), grouping them into categories to reduce the complexity of the choice process. The MEC is structured at three levels (attributes, consequences and values) at which conceptual categorizations and abstractions occur.

Attributes are physical and psychological constructs through which consumers describe or differentiate products (Valette-Florence & Rapachi 1991). The attributes of a product act as the main stimulus that influences the consumer when deciding whether or not to make a purchase, and he evaluates them based on his own values, beliefs and past experiences (Gutman 1982).

The intermediate level of a Means-End Chain is formed by consequences which are defined by Gutman (1982) as results which consumers hope to achieve through the consumption of products in certain situations.

In the quest to understand human behavior, values and systems of values have been the objects of many studies. According to Vriens and Ter Hofstede (2000), personal values can also be defined as relatively stable cognitions and beliefs that make a huge motivational impact on individuals. According to these authors, the meaning of a product may differ depending on the values of its consumers.

METHODOLOGY

This study was structured in three stages: the first two were exploratory and the third was conclusive and descriptive.
The preparatory stage was made up of preliminary and personal interviews with six professionals who work in the fragrance and luxury markets in order to define the brands of luxury fragrances for analysis. To achieve this, a list of fragrances was used which was prepared based on the luxury brands selected in the study of D’Angelo (2004). The data were collected in the work environment of the interviewees in August and September, 2006.

In the qualitative stage, interviews were conducted with nine final consumers of these luxury brands of fragrance. These interviews were semi-structured, in-depth and personal. They were recorded with the application of the Laddering Technique in order to define the perceptions of self-concept and the matrices of attributes, consequences and values for the preparation of the questionnaires to be answered in the final stage of the study. The script that was used in this stage had been approved by experienced scholars in the field of consumer behavior. The data were collected at the home and workplace of the respondents in December, 2006.

The quantitative stage involved survey-style interviews with 240 female consumers of luxury fragrances. In addition to studying the behavior of fragrance consumers, other aims of the questionnaire included the application of a self-concept scale based on Malhotra (1981), the attributes-benefits-values matrices in accordance with the Means-End Chain model and a set of attitudinal items developed by Dubois, Laurent and Czellar (2001). Originally prepared in English, this item was adapted to the Brazilian context, undergoing a reverse translation process, and applied in test form to a group of five female consumers as part of the pre-testing of the questionnaire given out during the quantitative stage. The data from this stage were collected in March, 2007 and the interviews were conducted at the residence and workplace of the respondents.

In the qualitative and quantitative stages, the sample was made up of female consumers residing in Curitiba in Brazil, with a minimum monthly household income of over 4,500 Brazilian reais (US$ 2,500), and who had obtained (either as a purchase or as a gift) at least one brand of luxury fragrance selected for this study in the previous twenty-four months. The sample in the quantitative stage was a non-probabilistic criterion sample with quotas related to the age group of the respondents. A choice was made to sample only women from certain age (from 20 to 55 years) and income brackets because they make up the majority of the fragrance consuming public in Brazil.

The analysis and interpretation of the data obtained during the quantitative stage were carried out with the aid of SPSS 15.0 and Latent Gold 3.0, utilizing the Associated Pattern Technique (APT), to operationalize the Means-End Chain and the Clusterization by the Latent Class Model to segment the consumers.

The APT has proved to be useful as a Laddering Technique supplement and as a collection instrument for large data samples, having successfully been used in a number of studies (Kaminski & Prado 2005). The basic premise of the APT is that the connections between attributes and consequences and values can be measured separately. Therefore, in the attributes-benefits (AB) matrix, these are set out in columns and lines, considering all possible combinations. The same happens in the benefits-values matrix (BV). The result is a set of data composed of binary observations. The data analysis is generally done through a log-linear regression model that is based on the likelihood of a certain attribute being related to a consequence and the probability of a consequence being related to a value (Ter Hofstede et al., 1998; Vrient & Hofstede, 2000).

The presentation of results is structured into two topics: results of the qualitative stage and results of the quantitative stage.

Results of the Qualitative Stage

The main goal of the qualitative stage was to identify the self-concept dimensions and the matrices of attributes, benefits and values for preparing the scales applied in the quantitative stage. Eleven such terms or adjectives were found which characterized the consumers interviewed at this stage: outgoing, self-assured, dynamic, vain, discreet, organized, secure, admired, independent, economic and modern. Through the Laddering Technique, the consumers linked twelve attributes to luxury fragrance: citric scent, floral scent, sweet scent, intense scent, mild scent, elegant/classic bottle, clean/modern bottle, elegant/classic box, clean/modern box, luxury brand, long-lasting scent and price.

Fourteen benefits were connected to these attributes by the respondents: feeling of well-being, doesn’t bother other people, marks the presence of the person wearing it, personal identification, offers beauty and sophistication, lasts a long time, is worth what it costs, has high quality, arouses the senses, pleases others, the scent stays on your skin for a long time, brings you closer to nature, has the advantages of a luxury brand and increases self-esteem.

When asked about the values of life associated with luxury consumption, the respondents mentioned seven personal values, all of them found among the nine on the List of Values (LOV) developed by Kahle (Kahle & Kennedy, 1989). For the purposes of this study, the LOV was chosen because it had been used successfully and was recommended by researchers such as Vrient and Ter Hofstede (2000) and Kaminski and Prado (2005) in cases of operationalizing the APT.

Results of the Quantitative Stage

Mapping the Means-End Chain

The chains of attributes-benefits-values were obtained when the 240 respondents made associations between the twelve attributes and fourteen benefits obtained in the qualitative stage and also the benefits and the nine personal values (LOV). In total, 2,94 chains were obtained, with 168 connecting attributes and benefits (AB) and 126 connecting benefits and values (BV). All 1,512 connections from the chains were submitted to log-linear regression in order to test the conditional independence among the matrices, i.e., that the relationship between attributes and benefits was independent of the relationship between benefits and personal

\[ \ln p_{ijk} = \alpha + \gamma_{ij}^{AB} + \gamma_{jk}^{BV} + \gamma_{ijk}^{ABV} + \varepsilon \]

\[ \alpha \] - Scalar constant (Ter Hofstede et al., 1998).
\[ \gamma_{ij}^{AB} \] - Frequency of the occurrence of the integration of attribute i with benefit j, removed from the contingency table generated by the AB matrix.
\[ \gamma_{jk}^{BV} \] - Frequency of the occurrence of the interaction of benefit j with value k, removed from the contingency table generated by the BV matrix.
\[ \gamma_{ijk}^{ABV} \] - Frequency of the occurrence of interaction of attribute i with benefit j and of benefit j with value k, removed from the contingency table generated by the AB and BV matrices.
\[ \varepsilon \] - Random error for observation.

In the log-linear regression, the frequency of the occurrence of individual components of the Means-End Chain Model (attributes, benefits and values) was not considered as it had no significant effect on the end result.
values. Only twelve of them (0.8%) had any significance. It was now possible to apply APT, the premise of which is that the connections between attributes and consequences and consequences and values should be measured separately (Ter Hofstede et al., 1998).

Following the APT methodology, the Hierarchical Value Map (HVM) was constructed by analyzing all the chains (AB and BV) obtained from the respondents and through the selection of the strongest connections between them. For this study, in order to draw a clear HVM with significant connections, the cut-off point was set at 75, the percentage used in the studies of Kaminski and Prado (2005). Consequently, in the AB matrix, this was centered on the likelihood of association of 0.20 and in the BV matrix, of 0.27. The final Map (Figure 1) includes a total of 76 connections (42 between attributes and benefits and 34 between benefits and values), 26% of the 294 chains obtained.

By analyzing only the chains with medium and strong intensity, i.e., with a likelihood greater than 0.23 and which have connections at all levels, a concentration of connections was found involving three human values: self-fulfillment, security and self-respect. These values are more concerned with the individual than interaction with other people. The benefits most closely connected with these values are: marking your presence, not bothering anyone, getting closer to nature, personal identification with the perfume, arousing the senses, the scent stays longer on your skin, high quality, offers beauty and sophistication, has high advantages of a luxury brand, makes the presence, brings you closer to nature, personal identification, brings the presence, makes the presence, and doesn't bother other people. The attributes with the most connections to these benefits have to do with the several types of scents, the elegant packaging and how long-lasting the scent is.

Segmentation of the Consumers of Luxury Fragrances

In this part, the proposed model for the segmentation of consumers of luxury fragrances will be presented, based on the attitudes of the respondents concerning luxury product consumption, measured by the scale of Dubois, Laurent and Czellar (2001).

The model utilized (LC cluster models) identifies consumer groups (cases) that share interests, values, characteristics and/or behaviors. Magidson and Vermunt (2002) list some of the advantages of this technique for traditional statistical cluster analysis models as a more arbitrary choice of criterion for classifying cases (based on conditioned probability) and the inclusion of stringent statistical tests which permit the validation of groups from the original sample. In the analysis, a variation was found of one to five different groups (Table 1).

According to the indicators in Table 1, the best configurations generated were those which contained three to five groups of consumers. The option was to work with three groups, principally taking into account the AWE (Average Weight of Evidence) indicator, which signals the adjustment of the model according to the number of estimated parameters, and also the possibility to compare three groups, as found by Dubois, Laurent and Czellar (2001). To understand better the composition of the clusters found, their data was also crossed with socio-demographic co-variables and the chi-square test was applied in order to identify the differences among them. The co-variables of income, level of education and the characteristics of self-concept and consumer behavior factors influenced the formation of the groups. This did not happen with aspects such as household income, marital status and whether or not the consumer had children. After establishing the three
clusters, the hierarchical values map was redone and showed different configurations for each group. A brief summary of each of the three clusters will now follow.

The “dreamers” group had the highest number of consumers, with a total of 92 cases (38.3%). Although they considered luxury consumption as lying outside of their world, they did aspire to its beauty and quality. Their level of income is slightly higher than that of the other groups. They usually receive luxury fragrances as a gift and tend to wear them less, saving them for special occasions. They consider themselves to be shy, more modest, less well organized, more insecure, less admired by others, more spendthrift and more traditional. Analysis of the HVM for this group (Figure 2) detected the value “sense of belonging,” which did not appear on the general map. This need to feel welcome in a certain group of people was connected with the benefit of increased self-esteem, which could mean that by wearing a fragrance whose characteristics are related to those of a certain group they aspire to be part of, the consumer feels more confident and, consequently, begins to feel a sense of...

### TABLE 1

LATENT CLASS MODEL INDICATORS GENERATED BY THE ATTITUDES OF THE PARTICIPANT CONSUMERS CONCERNING LUXURY CONSUMPTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
<th>MODEL 1</th>
<th>MODEL 2</th>
<th>MODEL 3</th>
<th>MODEL 4</th>
<th>MODEL 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nº. of groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log-likelihood (LL)</td>
<td>10682.0434</td>
<td>-9665.4434</td>
<td>-8781.5801</td>
<td>-8926.5999</td>
<td>-8606.897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIC (based on the LL)</td>
<td>21725.8089</td>
<td>20059.8118</td>
<td>18631.8849</td>
<td>19316.530</td>
<td>19044.328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIC (based on the LL)</td>
<td>21496.0867</td>
<td>19596.8868</td>
<td>17953.160</td>
<td>18387.200</td>
<td>17881.794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAIC (based on the LL)</td>
<td>21791.8089</td>
<td>20192.8118</td>
<td>18826.8849</td>
<td>19583.5303</td>
<td>19378.327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classification Errors</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
<td>0.0011</td>
<td>0.0147</td>
<td>0.0089</td>
<td>0.0029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entropy 1.0000</td>
<td>0.9958</td>
<td>0.9623</td>
<td>0.9831</td>
<td>0.9918</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AWE22285.5311</td>
<td>21189.4141</td>
<td>203052155</td>
<td>21591.5386</td>
<td>21882.889</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: RESEARCH DATA

### FIGURE 2

HIERARCHICAL MAP OF THE “DREAMERS”

Source: RESEARCH DATA
Segmentation and Consumption of Luxury Fragrances: A Means-End Chain Analysis

belonging. The attribute “luxury brand” established connections with the benefits “marks the presence of the person who wears it” (connected to the values of security and self-fulfillment) and “does not bother other people” (connected to the value sense of accomplishment). It is possible that this group feels that having the scent of a luxury fragrance is an important factor in making them confident and secure.

The “skeptics” group included 87 cases (36.3%) and was in favor of the concept of mass availability of luxury and the use of replicas, establishing less intense connections with the dimensions of quality, aesthetics and pleasure. The members of this group had a lower level of education and lower income. They normally purchase a luxury fragrance or receive it as a gift. They are also the group that most wears other types of fragrances. In the HVM for this group (Figure 3), the values “sense of accomplishment” and “fun and enjoyment of life” had no significant connection. On the other hand, the values “being well respected”, “warm relationships with others” and “sense of belonging” had important connections, the opposite of the general map. Analyzing this configuration of personal values, it is possible to observe that the consumers from this group prioritize values involving relationships with other people, and their perfume becomes a tool for this. On the other hand, the attribute “luxury brand” had no significant connections for this group, indicating that these consumers tend to associate high price, rather than brand, with high quality.

The “connoisseurs” group was made up of 61 consumers (25.4%) who valued all the dimensions commonly associated with luxury products (quality, scarcity, distinction, pleasure, etc.). They have a higher level of education and they are in the habit of buying their luxury fragrances and have been using them for a longer time and more frequently than the other consumers. They are also more familiar with the origin of the product and the brand. They consider themselves outgoing, self-assured, dynamic, vain, well organized, confident, admired by others and independent. In the HVM for this group (Figure 4), the value “fun and enjoyment of life” stood out as having the most connections. It was associated with the following benefits: “the scent stays on your skin for longer” (directly linked to the attribute of long-lasting scent), “increased self-esteem” (directly linked to the price attribute) and “it aroused the senses” (linked to the attributes floral scent, intense scent and price). Analysis of this information showed that these consumers seek pleasure and hedonism, made possible by longer-lasting fragrances with a pleasant scent and a price that matches all of these aspects. Furthermore, this was the group for which the attribute luxury brand had the highest number of significant connections.

Both similarities and differences were found between the groups from this study and the groups from the study of Dubois, Laurent and Czellar (2001). Nevertheless, it is important to point out that one of the biggest differences between the two studies has to do with the sampling profile. While the French researchers worked with a sample made up of university students from twenty countries (whom they believed to be potential consumers of luxury goods), this study involved consumers who already are users of luxury fragrances. After analyzing the data, the differences in the profile and the chain of attributes-benefits-values of each group, plus the categorization, selection and consumption processes for
luxury fragrances are evident. Furthermore, a higher degree of ambiguity and complexity in the attitudes of consumers concerning luxury consumption was found here than in the international study.

**FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The study of consumer behavior using the Means-End Chain Model takes the researchers on an interesting path for the characterization of cognitive interrelationships between attributes, consequences and personal values. In the study of occasional luxury consumption, which—accordingly to Dubois, Laurent and Czellar (2001)—commonly involves a high level of complexity and ambiguity, this approach, along with segmentation by the Latent Class Model, proved to be effective when it came to broadening the understanding of the consumption process.

By analyzing the results, it is possible to assume that, by wearing a luxury fragrance, the consumers who took part in this study wish to feel good about themselves and more confident and secure when dealing with other people. They wish to “make their mark without bothering anyone”. The fragrance was also seen as a form of self expression and, therefore, the consumers wished to make their perfume match their style.

Like the work of Dubois, Laurent and Czellar (2001), research for this study also came across the ambiguity and complexity involved in the occasional consumption of luxury items. However, in this study, these aspects are more intense, especially for the “dreamers” and “skeptics”. Although the “dreamers” are already consumers, they view luxury as lying outside of their world but aspire to the prestige to be gained from a luxury brand. Meanwhile the “skeptics”, who have also declared that they are consumers, are more in favor of making luxury available to the general public and do not value the term “brand name” and its dimensions of quality, aesthetics and pleasure. To these consumers, attributes such as packaging and high price are normally understood to be indicators of quality.

A comparison of the results of this study and the dimensions of luxury products of Allèrés (2000) and Dubois, Laurent and Czellar (2001) showed that the respondents more intensely associated luxury perfume with the functional dimension (the usefulness of the product itself) and the symbolic dimension (having to do with hedonism and narcissism when using the product). The social dimension, a desire to feel a sense of belonging or to stand out from the crowd, was secondary. On the other hand, the historical/cultural dimension (valuing the history of the brand or its creator) was not an important factor in this study.

From a managerial viewpoint, the results of this study indicate a great marketing challenge for companies operating in the luxury fragrance sector in that the brand is unknown to the occasional consumer. At the same time, the results indicate that there is an opportunity for other fragrance companies to give their products new attributes for aroma, external packaging and long-lasting fragrance, emulating features that tend to be associated to luxury fragrances.

There are some limitations to this study due to the fact that the sampling is non-probabilistic, limited to one geographical region and only includes women. These factors do not allow a more objective evaluation of the results and do not provide data on all consumers of luxury fragrances. To carry on with this study, it would be interesting to apply the same methodology to the study of
luxury fragrances worn by men. It would also be interesting to examine other categories of luxury products and services.

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ABSTRACT

Fashion is a way that the consumer has to monitor the changing fashion environment on a regular basis. In this perspective, fashion clothing involvement is a degree that the consumer perceives the relevance of the fashion in its life. This study has as goal to test an extended theoretical model of fashion clothing involvement that represents the antecedents and consequents of fashion involvement. Nine hypotheses are proposed and tested using structural equation modeling. The data, collecting in a survey of 315 people, showed support to five of them. Conclusions and general comments end the paper.

INTRODUCTION

For centuries the phenomena of fashion behavior have been the varied subject of social analysts, cultural historians, moral critics, academic theorists, and business entrepreneurs (Sproles & Fink, 1974). From the academic perspective, King, Ring and Tigert (1979) conceptualized the fashion change agent as a consumer who at least monitors the changing fashion environment on a regular basis but who also keeps his/her wardrobe up-to-date with current fashions most of the time. In this context, fashion clothing appears to become so important that many people are now more involved with it, indicating, as a consequence, the concept of “fashion involvement” as a recent consumer behavior construct.

This study has as goal to test an extended theoretical model of fashion clothing involvement that represents the antecedents and consequents of fashion involvement. Hence, this paper is organized as follows. It initially proposes the hypotheses that structure the extended model. Next, it discusses the concepts, the scales and the methods used for doing the research field. Consequently, it analyzes the data using structural equation modeling. Then, the article ends with a conclusion about the topic and suggestions for future research.

HYPOTHESIS PROPOSITION

Browne and Kaldenberg (1997) presented a causal relation between materialism and involvement, indicating that the first could be the antecedent of the second. In this context, it could be inferred that fashion clothing, as possession, may be seen for its role as a code (i.e. assists in portraying acceptable images). In fact, diverse theorists have demonstrated the use of clothing as a code and a language, which allows a message to be created and (selectively) understood (McCracken and Roth 1989). For instance, Noesirwan and Crawford (1982) make this convergence saying that clothing is primarily a means of communicating, not personal identity, but social identity to other. Thus, since fashion clothing creates the impression (Belk 1985) and is a way of presenting the codes and signs, it could be an indicative that materialism is linked to fashion involvement, since materialism is way of cause impression to others. In this circumstance, O’Cass (2004) comments that some products are thought to include fashion clothing, because it is particularly susceptible to differences in consumption stereotyping and therefore to differences in ability to encode and decode a range of messages and images. Then, it is expected that materialism could influence fashion clothing involvement, because the last one is a way of presenting messages, appearance (O’Cass 2004), image, feelings, and possessions. In addition, empirical research have been show that materialism leaves to involvement (Browne and Kaldengerg 1997; O’Cass 2004). Based on this context, the first hypothesis is: $H_1$: Materialism has a significant positive influence on Fashion Clothing Involvement.

Tigert, King and Ring (1980) stated, based on seven major fashion studies across four different cultures, that a much larger proportion of the female fashion buying public is now monitoring new women’s fashions on a regular basis. Thus, it is one of the indicatives is that woman is more involved in fashion than man’s. In their seminal research on the interpretation of clothing “codes”, McCracken and Roth (1989) found that females were significantly better than men in interpreting the syntax of clothing codes. That is, women recognized more readily a “look” and were more sensitive to fashion cues than men are (Agyt and Elliott, 1998). Moreover, recent research has shown that men and women differ in the way they pay attention to cues in advertising (Meyers-Levy and Maheswaran, 1991) and similarly that they read fashion symbols with different criteria (e.g. Elliott, 1994; Meyers-Levy and Sternthal, 1991). Thus, females have been found to be more sensitive to the informative details provided in ads than men generally are and tend to focus more on their own external appearance, as reflected by the positive relationship between fashion consciousness and public self-consciousness (Agyt and Elliott, 1998). For that reason, females could also be more sensitive to fashion clothing involvement than men generally are, since fashion clothing has more of a feminine image and thus females will place it in a more central position in their lives than males (O’Cass 2004). In fact, some studies argue that woman is more involved in fashion than man is (Tigert, King and Ring 1980; Tigert, Ring and Ring 1976; Browne and Kaldenberg 1997; Agyt and Elliott 1998; O’Cass 2004). Thus, it is hypothesized that: $H_2$: Gender has a significant positive influence on Fashion Clothing Involvement.

Age has also been identified as an important dimension in fashion clothing (O’Cass 2004). Some studies indicated that differences in fashion clothing attachment and usage are said to exist (Agyt and Elliott 1998; O’Cass 2004). The assumption is that younger people in general place more emphasis on their appearance than older people (O’Cass 2004). It could be because teens need to be accepted in the reference group, try to imitate aspiration group, or are trying to gain some approbation. Furthermore, it is hypothesized that $H_3$: Age has a significant negative influence on Fashion Clothing involvement; i.e. younger people place more emphasis on fashion clothing than olders’.

O’Cass (2004) comments that knowledge has been referred to, in the literature, as product familiarity or prior knowledge of the object or stimuli. In the context of fashion clothing, product knowledge is viewed as knowledge of brands in the product class and in terms of product-use contexts and product attribute knowledge, frequency of use and experience with fashion clothing (Johnson and Russo 1981, 1984; Raju and Reilly 1979). According to O’Cass (2004), knowledge can come from product experiences, ad exposure, interactions with sales people, friends or the media, previous decision-making or previous consumption and usage experiences held in memory. Some studies indicated that fashion clothing involvement has a significant positive influence on consumers’ perception of fashion knowledge (e.g. Gill et. al. 1988; Parameswaran and Spinelli 1984; Phelps and Thorson 1991; Zinkhan and Muderisogy 1985). However, theses studies did not investigated fashion knowledge based on subjective fashion knowledge. Sub-
jective fashion knowledge is operationalising in terms of how much a consumer thinks or perceives they know about the product (i.e. individual’s subjective self-report). Objective fashion knowledge is operationalising in terms of how much a consumer actually knows about the product (i.e. long-term memory). This study takes the Subjective fashion knowledge perspective. The proposition is raised here is that since the product knowledge has a number of key aspects (fashion clothing familiarity, experience and expertise), it should be affected by the degree of involvement in fashion clothing. Hence, it is hypothesized that: \( H_6 \): Fashion Clothing involvement has a significant positive influence on consumers’ perception of Fashion Knowledge.

Consumers’ perception of fashion knowledge is suggested to be linked to confidence. Depending on the circumstances, the degree of confidence could reflect either certainty or uncertainty as to which judgment is correct or the best in that situation, or ambiguity as to the meaning of an attitude object altogether (Zajonc and Morrisette, 1960). Confidence, is this context, represents a consumer’s belief that their knowledge or ability is sufficient or correct regarding fashion clothing (O’Cass 2004). Wendler (1983) defines confidence as the consumer’s subjective certainty that he or she has made the decision that is best for him or her. In other words, it is the ability to make the right choice in the context of fashion clothing. It is expected that fashion clothing knowledge will have a positive effect on consumers’ confidence. It is because fashion clothing knowledge is linked to the degree of knowledge that a consumer has, this acquaintance would help the consumer in making the right decision about fashion clothing (i.e. to make more confidence in its judgment). Therefore: \( H_7 \): Fashion Clothing knowledge has a significant positive influence on consumers’ Confidence in making the right decision about fashion clothing.

The next hypothesis deals with fashion clothing involvement and confidence. The literature indicates that confidence-involvement has been investigating so much (Parameswaran and Spinelli 1984; Burton and Netemeyer 1992). However, these studies do not deal with fashion clothing segment. Chebat and Picard (1985) showed that involvement had a direct effect on confidence in both product and message, in that the more involved the consumer was, the more confident they were. Based on the same idea, Park and Lessing (1981) raised a theoretical proposition that consumers are likely to be more confident when they are more highly involved in a product. Wendler (1983) also supported the hypothesis that a high risk and involvement situation, confidence will increase only to the extent that the consumer information is understood and used. O’Cass (2004) believes that one of the key outcomes of being involved in a product is perhaps that one would tend to be more confident in decisions or purchases related to that product or product class. Therefore, it is hypothesized that: \( H_8 \): Fashion Clothing involvement has a significant positive influence on consumers’ confidence in making the right decision about fashion clothing.

Some research indicated that there is a relationship between involvement and commitment, indicating that the last one is the consequent (Beatty et al 1988). Iwasaky and Havitz (1998) proposed a model that suggested the existence of a relationship between involvement, commitment and loyalty (in that sequence). However, no empirical test was conducted. The logic behind this sequence is that more involved the consumer is (using more cognitive think), more commited he/she will be with their decision (paying more attention to that choice). Freire and Nique (2005) tested this causal relation, using and putting continuity commitment as a mediator of involvement-loyalty relation, and found support. Continuity commitment (or calculative) is based on cognitive evaluation of the brand and it is inferred that the consumer maintain its behavior consistent while perceive the benefits gained from the brand (Amine, 1998). In this study, continuity commitment will not be related to the brand, but to the store (i.e. based on the perceived costs in abandon the relation). Thus, it is hoped that when more involved with fashion clothing the consumer is, more commitment he/she will have with his/her store. Thus, \( H_7 \): Fashion Clothing involvement has a significant positive influence on consumers’ Continuity Commitment.

O’Cass (2004) suggested that the issue of antecedents of involvement with fashion could be extended to include personal values and personality traits and consequences such as information search and time spent shopping. Based on this context, this study hopes that the time spent in shopping be great in people buying fashion clothing than conventional clothing. It is because normal clothing could not demand some degree of expertise with brands and the cognitive effort could not be as great as buying fashion clothing. In addition, social-psychological perspective assumes that time uses represent indications of consumer lifestyles (McDonald, 1994). In consequence, it is presumable that since fashion clothing is a lifestyle, time could be a consequent of this. Thus, it is predictable that: \( H_8 \): Fashion Clothing involvement has a significant positive influence on Time Spent in Shopping.

Store patronage is the consumer’s selection for a shopping outlet (Haynes et al., 1994). Patronage patterns are theorized as based on consumer characteristics including social factors (Haynes et al., 1994). Patronage behavior is influenced by a variety of characteristics at each stage in the decision process (McKinney et al. 2004). Research has shown more specifically that clothing store patronage is related to fashion involvement for some consumers (Kopp, Eng & Tigert, 1989; see also McKinney et al. 2004). Higher levels of fashion involvement have been associated with consumers who patronize department stores rather than discount stores (Tatze1, 1982). Thus, consumers who use clothing to enhance self-esteem tend to shop more in special and better department stores (McKinney et al 2004). Therefore, the next hypothesis is: \( H_9 \): Fashion Clothing involvement has a significant positive influence on Patronage.

**METHOD**

**Measurement.** The scale used for measuring fashion clothing involvement (three items), fashion clothing knowledge (two items) and fashion clothing confidence (three items) was choose from O’Cass (2004) and they were double-back translation. Three items referred to time spent in shopping were used and (e.g. “buying fashion clothing demands much time”) developed from the literature. For measuring patronage, we choose four items from the instrument used by D’Angelo et al (2003). For measuring calculative commitment, we choose three items from the instrument used by Freire and Nique (2005). For measuring materialism, we choose five items from the instrument used by Monteiro (2005). All those scales were operationalising using seven-point likert scale.

**Questionnaire Pre-Test.** A pre-test was used to verify the instrument with 53 business students, who were not part of the final sample. The results indicated that the materialism instrument was not psychometrically good. The results also indicated that the patronage instrument was not psychometrically good. The rest of the scales sounds good and because of these problems with materialism and patronage scales, this study used other instruments.

**Sample.** The sample was defined as non-probabilistic by convenience. One of the goals was to collected data from different demographic profile. This process could generate different kind of opinion, increasing the wealth of data collection and trying to reduce the sample bias. Therefore, the overall sample include students from one academic-college (n=107) and from two technical-college (n=115; n=19). It is because the academic-college is
younger than the technical-college’s, and is not employed yet. In addition, two companies were contacted and just their office-employees agree in answer the questionnaire (n=20). To concluded, some other questionnaires (n=54) were got after five days in a hairdresser. Thus, the final sample was 315.

DATA ANALYSIS
Male were 54% of the sample. People who commented that they buy fashion clothing is around 54%. The familiar income values were R$0-1000 (29%); 1001-2500 (45%); 2501-4000 (14%); 4001-5000 (3%) and 5001-above (9%) [US$1,00=R$2,20 approximately]. The average age was 23 and the range was between 12 and 70.

For the hypothesis test, structural equation model was used. Thus, for such propose, the data were pre-analyzed according to some criteria for better purification. The missing values found were below 5% and they were substituted by means (Kline 1998). Outliers were verified according two criteria: one is based on score Z, where values above ±2 are identified (they were retained), and the second one was based on Mahalanobis distance D² (none case). Therefore, the final sample was 301 observations. Normality was checked in terms of kurtosis (±5), skewness (±2) and Kolmogorov Smirnoff test (p<0.01). In these three features, the non-normality was found, although within the moderator parameters. Multicolinearity was assessed using Pearson correlations, where values above ±0.90 were excluded because they could mean the same variable (none case).

Thus, after these initial check procedures, multivariate data analysis was used. First of all, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to evaluate the unidimensionality of the variables. Thus, the criterion for excluding the variables in the matrix was load-values under 0.35 (cut-off). For extraction, axis principal was used and, for rotation, oblimin method was utilized (eigenvalues>1). Table 1 shows some results from that analysis. According to the data, Materialism, Involvement and Time were the constructs evaluated. The next step was analyzing the constructs by the discriminant validity, using Fornell and Larcker (1981) procedure. It uses as basis the correlation matrix. The results from discriminant validity can be viewed in the upper triangle of Table 2. In addition, we calculate average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) for the constructs. The results from AVE and CR also indicate Materialism with a poor reliability. The only unexpected result comes from a non-significant correlation between patronage and involvement (r=-0.004), indicating a non association between these two constructs.

After discussing the validity and reliability of the scales and the construct used in the research, the global model was tested. Global fit indicates that the model needs to be adjusted for the data before testing the hypothesis. Without a good fits on the data, the path coefficients cannot be assessed. Thus, AMOS software was used to estimate the hypothesis and the values for the global model fits were: χ2/df=2.977, p=0.000; AGFI=0.824; GFI=0.87; NFI= 0.835; IFI= 0.884; CFI=0.883; TLI= 0.86; RMSEA=0.081. The Maximum Likelihood estmative was the method used, considering all constructs as latent variables. Results from each hypothesis are discussed ahead.

HYPOTHESIS DISCUSSION
The first hypothesis could not be verified since it achieve poor values in alpha Cronbach (0.57) and in AVE and CR (0.33 and 0.59). Because of that low values, the model could be compromise. Thus, this construct was retired from the model (see end notes). In addition, theses results (pre-test scale and second test-instrument) could be indicative of necessity for suggesting an instrument to measure materialism in Brazil, given that the two scales used for such propose, both had problems.

Tigert, King and Ring (1980) stated, based on seven major fashion studies across four different cultures, that a much larger proportion of the female fashion buying public is now monitoring fashions on a regular basis. Other studies also found

FIGURE 1
Fashion Clothing Involvement Theoretical Model

Source: Adapted from O’Cass (2004, p.870)
the same results (McCracken and Roth 1989; O’Cass 2004) signifying that woman is more fashion involved than man”. Though, the results indicated that the second hypothesis was not support ($\beta=0.01; t=0.22; p=0.822$). A possible explanation for this result is that men may be changing their focus and orientation to fashion clothing in the last years. In fact, the masculine society is been more vanity, indicating the appearance of “meter sexual” figure (i.e. David Beckham). It appears that men are now spending more time in hairdresser, making more silicon implant in their legs, frequenting more the gyms and so forth. As a consequence, future research could presuppose to test this difference in fashion clothing orientation (male versus female).

The third hypothesis gives to understand that younger people in general place more emphasis on their appearance than older people (O’Cass 2004). This assumption could be explained because younger people could be associating in a reference group (i.e. social gathering and social environment) or could be trying to gain some approbation by other friends. Another explanation comes from Law, Zhang and Leung (2004), who comment that young consumers have the courage and interest to try on new innovations; and new fashion often starts with young ($\beta=-0.15; t=-2.39; p=0.017$). The fourth hypothesis was not rejected, indicating that the fashion clothing involvement leaves to subjective fashion knowledge ($\beta=0.47; t=5.89; p=0.000$). This result is consistent with some literature about the topic. Furthermore, the results from this research extend the literature in two points of view. The first investigates fashion knowledge and confirming the relationship between involvement and knowledge (i.e. Gill et al 1988; Parameswaran and Spinelli 1984; Phelps and Thorson 1991; Zinkhan and Muderrisogly 1985). The second extends O’Cass (2004) subjective point of view. Based on this context, future research could test new models creating the hypothesis that fashion clothing involvement leaves to both subjective and objective fashion knowledge.

The fifth hypothesis was not rejected and indicates that consumers’ perception of fashion knowledge is suggested to be linked to confidence, since it appears that the degree of confidence could reflect either certainty or uncertainty as to which judgment is correct, or ambiguity as to the meaning of an attitude object altogether (Zajonc and Morissette, 1960). Taylor and Cosenza (2002) also confirm this idea, founding that teen age group was preoccupied with social acceptance, social affiliation and “coolness” attached to make the right clothing judgment. Consumers’

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The table below presents the unidimensionality test using exploratory factor analysis and the correlation matrix and discriminant validity results:

**TABLE 1**
Unidimensionality Test Using Exploratory Factor Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Dimensions after EFA</th>
<th>KMO</th>
<th>Bartlett ($p&lt;0.01$)</th>
<th>Alpha ($\alpha$)</th>
<th>VE%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.66$^a$</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.55$^b$</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.58$^c$</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patronage</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Between parenthesis indicates the number of variables before EFA; Note: KMO=Kaiser Test; VE=Variance Extracted; Principal Axis-Oblimin; $^a$ After excluding the invol_1 it was VE with 84%, Alpha=0.82 (it was used); $^b$ After excluding the mat_5 it was one dimension with 44%, Alpha=0.57; $^c$ After excluding the time_3 it was VE with 73%, Alpha=0.71 (it was used)

**TABLE 2**
Correlation Matrix and Discriminant Validity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>s.d.</th>
<th>AVE</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>Invol</th>
<th>Know</th>
<th>Confid</th>
<th>Mat</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Patr</th>
<th>Co.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.33***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>.18***</td>
<td>.484**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.142*</td>
<td>.253**</td>
<td>.157**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.132*</td>
<td>.397**</td>
<td>.314**</td>
<td>.279**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patronage</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.301**</td>
<td>.359**</td>
<td>.225**</td>
<td>.293**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.141*</td>
<td>.360**</td>
<td>.224**</td>
<td>.203**</td>
<td>.136*</td>
<td>.259**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Mean of a scale of 7 points; The upper triangle means correlations squared; The diagonal means AVE; s.d.= Standard Deviation; Correlations are significant at the 0.05 level*** and at the 0.01 level* (2-tailed).
perception of fashion knowledge on confidence was the major beta value ($\beta=0.63; t=6.743; p<0.000$), indicating a strongest impact in the model and a strong relation from subjective knowledge on ability to make the right decision.

The sixth hypothesis was rejected. It point out that consumers’ perception of fashion knowledge is not suggested to be allied to confidence ($\beta=0.05; t=-0.68; p=0.499$). It is also in agreement with O’Cass (2004) results (i.e. bootstrap<1.96). The idea about involvement and confidence was initially based on Parameswaran and Spinelli (1984) and Burton and Netemeyer, (1992), who investigated that relation in the context of voting. O’Cass (2004) tried to test this relation in fashion clothing and got success. However, the hypothesis appears to lack of theoretical consistence in its formation. O’Cass (2004) gives to understand that the stability of preference is the basis of confidence. Using the same argument, this study could believe that the stability of preference is not so well defined in fashion clothing segment and therefore could jeopardize the basis of confidence, leaving to the fact that involvement does not is related to consumers’ confidence.

The seventh hypothesis tested the proposition of Iwasaky and Havitz (1998), who agree that there is a relationship between involvement, commitment and loyalty (in that sequence). However, loyalty was not tested in this study. Freire and Nique (2005) tested this causal relation using and putting continuity commitment as a mediator of involvement-loyalty relation and found support ($\beta=0.32$) to involvement-commitment. A possible explanation to this result is that the higher the involvement with fashion clothing, the higher the continuity commitment the consumer will have in maintain its closet upgraded with trends ($\beta=0.23; t=3.34; p=0.001$).

Then, the commitment could appear as a justification to the fact that the consumer needs to maintain its appearance with the one prescribes by the market. Thus, this process could be viewed as a cognitive evaluation of the garment and it is inferred that the consumer keep its buyer behavior consistent while perceive the benefits gained from the “moment” garment (Amine, 1998).

The eight hypothesis was not rejected ($\beta=0.17; t=4.11; p=0.000$). It shows that fashion involvement and time spent shopping were significantly and positively related. These results support the research by Flynn and Goldsmith (1993) and Tatzel (1982). In fact, these finds again indicate that the consumer needs to keep his/her wardrobe up-to-date with current fashions most of the time. Thus, for such propose spending more time deciding, trying and wearing fashion clothing in stores are important process by which the consumer needs to pass.

As it was described before in the ninth hypothesis, store patronage is the consumer’s selection for a shopping outlet (Haynes et al., 1994). Some research has shown that clothing store patronage is related to fashion involvement for some consumers (Kopp, Eng and Tigert, 1989; McKinney et. al. 2004). Higher levels of fashion involvement have been associated with consumers who patronize department stores rather than discount stores (Tatzel, 1982). Thus, consumers who use clothing to enhance self-esteem tend to shop more in special (indicating more quality) and better department stores (McKinney et al. 2004). As a result, the consequences rejected $H_9$ ($\beta=0.08; t=1.18; p=0.239$). A possible reason for that outcome is that higher levels of fashion involvement could not be related with consumers who patronize department stores. In fact, fashion clothing does not necessarily is buying in special (top) stores. In parallel, fashion clothing could also be buying in discount stores (for example, tear-old-jeans or flannel-shirt).

In summarize, the research outcomes indicate that the fashion involvement construct lack of predictor variables, since 2.4% of the variance was explained by age (8% adding materialism construct). Second, commitment is also requiring more antecedents, because of its 5.2% of variance is due to fashion involvement. Time achieve 3%.

**FASHION CLOTHING INVOLVEMENT AS MEDIATOR FACTOR**

O’Cass (2004) comments that a major challenge facing involvement research lies not only in understanding involvement itself, but also in understanding the role involvement plays together with other variables in guiding the formation of purchase and consumption patters and experience of consumers of fashion clothing. Hence, this study also tested the mediator factor of fashion clothing involvement. Baron and Kenny (1986) suggested that variable functions as a mediator when it meets the some conditions. Therefore, this study uses Baron and Kenny (1986) scheme for testing the mediation factor. As a result, fashion involvement mediate the relation between age and commitment, and between age and subjective knowledge. The results were: Age → Involvement ($\beta=0.15; p<0.017$), Involvement → Commitment ($\beta=0.23; p<0.001$), Age → Involvement → Commitment ($\beta=0.02; p<0.0688$), Age → Involvement ($\beta=0.15; p<0.017$), Involvement → Knowledge ($\beta=0.47; p<0.000$), and Age → Involvement → Knowledge ($\beta=0.05; p<0.0462$).

**FINAL CONSIDERATION**

Responding to the purpose of this study, to test an extended theoretical model of fashion clothing involvement, it can be said that the fashion clothing involvement appears to be an important construct in the fashion segment, since some theoretical propositions were supported in this study. An important consideration is that the fashion involvement antecedents need to be more explored, because from the three constructs supposed to be antecedents, just one was supported. Moreover, the fashion involvement $R^2=0.02$ appears to be so low. Second, the materialism construct might be lacking a psychometric instrument, given that the two scales used in this study failed. Therefore, future research could analyze the materialism construct with more details. In addition, it is important to comment that even using the non reliability materialism construct, the $R^2=0.08$ had an frivolous increase. The third latent conclusion is that fashion clothing involvement meditates two theoretical relations. The first one is between age and commitment, and the second one is between age and subjective knowledge. The fourth interesting result indicates that inverting both the relation between involvement-knowledge and involvement-commitment, the theoretical model achieve the best variance in the fashion involvement construct ($R^2=0.22$). In summarize, the framework appears to be a valuable support in comprehending the dynamics of fashion consumption. Other studies might refine the model suggested here and advance more in the fashion involvement comprehension. Thus, consumers’ behavior researchers might consider studying more the fashion clothing consumption with more fervor.

**REFERENCES**


Simultaneous Exposure to Television Programming and Advertising Content in an Interactive Context: Perceptual and Semantic Interference and Reinforcement

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ABSTRACT

New media often combine different sensory inputs and different types of media content simultaneously. These combined information cues may interfere with each other, or may reinforce the processing of each other. In an Interactive Digital Television (IDTV) setting, the dual task of being exposed to interactive advertising and programme context simultaneously is a common situation that is fundamentally different from traditional media. Experiment 1 focuses on the perceptual interference or reinforcement of the representation format of information in the interactive ad and the modality of the programme context. Experiment 2 places the emphasis on semantic interference and cognitive priming, following experiential or goal-directed browsing.

INTRODUCTION

One of the new advertising formats available on Interactive Digital Television (IDTV), the merging of television and the Internet, is the telepovic ad. Through a click on the call-to-action button in a traditional ad, clickable content appears on screen providing additional information (e.g., Reading et al. 2006). This interactivity embedded in the persuasive information has the capability of evoking a cognitively involving experience (Shrum 2004). Liu and Shrum (2002) define cognitive involvement as: “the cognitive elaboration that occurs in a communication process” (p. 60). This “situational” involvement is created through active control and two-way communication, two dimensions of interactivity that focus the viewer’s attention to the interactive content (Hoffman and Novak 1996). However, to avoid that individuals would miss part of their programming, this new advertising format allows individuals to follow the preceding broadcasting content using the picture-in-picture technology. When individuals are simultaneously exposed to an interactive advertising message and a programme context, they will divide their attention between both tasks which can lead to an interference effect that is expected to be more substantial than for traditional media, in which the programming and the commercial message precede each other in a linear manner. Interference can be defined as “the process by which our ability to recollect information is hindered by our exposure to some other information” (Kumar 2000, 155). Ruy et al. (2007) distinguish between different types of interference. Perceptual interference relates to the simultaneous processing of information of different modalities (e.g., reading or listening) and/or different representation formats (Verbal or non-verbal). Furnham, Bergland, and Gunter (2002, 527) define semantic (or cognitive) interference as follows: “Cognitive interference postulates that where an advert is placed within a programme of similar content, elements of the programme and advertisement merge together in a phenomenon known as meltdown, resulting in impaired recall.” Besides the negative interference effects of simultaneous exposure to ad and context, also positive reinforcement effects were observed. For instance, past research has shown that integrated multi-sensory cues can enhance learning and experience (e.g., Zenhui and Bensabat 2007). Congruent context information may also cognitively prime the embedded advertisement, leading to more attention, information processing and a positive evaluation (e.g., Herr 1989). The type of motivation to interact with the persuasive information, experiential versus goal-directed, can have a moderating influence on this mechanism (e.g., Hoffman and Novak 1996). The main contribution of this study is to investigate the interference and reinforcement of the simultaneous exposure to advertising and context stimuli in an interactive context. The results of two experiments are described. In experiment 1, perceptual interference/reinforcement is examined. In experiment 2, semantic interference/reinforcement is investigated. In both experiments, effects on self-reported attention to the interactive advertisement, clicking behaviour, and message evaluation are measured.

EXPERIMENT 1

Experiment 1 assesses the effect of the modality of the programme context (auditory vs. audiovisual) and the representation format of the information in the interactive ad (text vs. text with pictures) under simultaneous exposure. The focus of experiment 1 is perceptual interference and reinforcement.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

When individuals are simultaneously exposed to information represented by different modalities and/or representation formats perceptual interference may occur, or the different information cues may reinforce the processing of each other. The modality effect (Sweller 1988) states that presenting information through different sensory modalities (e.g., auditory and visual) will enhance the processing of this information by extending the working memory capacity compared to information represented through only one modality. However, when the attention is divided between two independent tasks (such as an interactive ad and a context) the encoding of information will be impaired even if the information is represented through different sensory modalities. Paivio’s (1988) dual coding theory asserts that verbal and non-verbal systems process information using two different cognitive subsystems, one for language (verbal information, such as words) and one for non-verbal objects (e.g., pictures, motion,...). Because more resources are activated to process both the verbal and the non-verbal information simultaneously, processing will be more extensive in case two representation formats are used compared to only one. Moreover, Babin and Burns (1997) found that a print ad that contained a concrete picture of a product was more effective in stimulating imagery processing compared to one with an abstract picture or without a picture. Imagery processing is likely to attract and hold the attention to the information, and therefore requires cognitive resources (e.g., Bone and Ellen 1992). This implies that its activation competes for resources with other perceptual tasks. Ummava, Agarwal, and Haugvedt (1996) found that this competition for resources is especially large when the imagery and perception occur within the same modality. The effect of imagery on the evaluation of information is found in most studies to be positive (e.g., Babin and Burns 1997). Based on the dual coding theory and the imagery thinking principle, a stimulus containing both verbal (text) and non-verbal information (pictures) facilitates encoding, compared to a stimulus which contains only verbal information. Related to the secondary stimulus, because only a single modality and symbolic
system are addressed by an auditory programme context, it is more difficult to process compared to an audiovisual programme context. The key question of this experiment is the nature of the interaction effect of the representation format of the interactive ad and the modality of the programme context on the attention paid to and the amount of clicks in the interactive ad, and the evaluation of the ad message.

When the information in the interactive ad is represented by text only, and not likely to evoke imagery processing, the modality effect assumes that the auditory representation of the programme context can be processed independent of the visual information represented in the interactive ad. However, Tavassoli and Lee (2003) found that incongruent auditory elements have a larger detrimental effect on the processing of alphabetic text than visual non-verbal information, because of the overlap in resources between both verbal systems. This implies that the interference effect will be larger for the auditory programme context compared to the audiovisual context. Therefore, we expect that in case of a text only interactive ad, the interference of the auditory programme context is larger than that of the audiovisual programme context.

When the interactive ad combines text with concrete, congruent pictures, it is more likely to evoke imagery thinking. This may lead to competition with the perception of information of the same modality (Umanava, Agarwal, and Haugveldt 1996). Therefore, it can be expected that the audiovisual programme context will interfere more with the verbal/pictorial interactive ad than the auditory programme context, implying a lower self reported level of attention to the information and less clicks than in the auditory programme context. Therefore, we expect that in case of a text only interactive ad, the interference of the auditory programme context is larger than that of the audiovisual programme context.

H1: In case of verbal representation of the interactive ad (text only), the audiovisual programme context leads to a more positive effect on the attention devoted to the interactive ad, and a higher amount of clicks in the interactive ad than the auditory programme context. In case of non-verbal representation of the interactive ad (text combined with pictures), the auditory programme context leads to a more positive effect on attention devoted to the interactive ad, and a higher amount of clicks in the interactive ad than the audiovisual programme context.

Past studies concerning the modality and dual coding theory mainly focused on the attention- and memory-related outcomes of simultaneous exposure. Given that the amount of attention paid to information may be an indicator of the level of involvement with the information, the processing may be more in depth. This may lead to a higher level of counterargumentation or to the development of more pro-arguments. Given that the combined effect of the modality of the programme context and the representation format of the interactive ad are uncertain regarding the evaluation of the advertising message, we formulate the following research question:

RQ.1: What is the interaction effect of the representation format of the interactive ad (text vs. text combined with pictures) and the modality of the programme context (auditory vs. audiovisual) on the evaluation of the advertising message?

Method
Participants were shown a sequence of a programme, followed by an interactive ad, containing a call-to-action. After responding to the call-to-action an interactive part displaying clickable information appeared. While browsing in the interactive part, the programme context appeared auditory or audiovisually.

Stimuli and participants
A 2 (modality of programme context) x 2 (representation format of the interactive ad) between subjects factorial design was used. A sequence of the movie “Taxi” was selected. In the audiovisual programme context condition, the programme appears in the right upper corner of the screen, using the picture-in-picture technology. In the auditory programme context condition, the programme was not visible and the interactive information was available on the whole screen. The users could only hear the programme in the background. The advertising stimuli are combinations of a traditional 30″ commercial, with an integrated call-to-action (“Click here for more information”), followed by an interactive part with clickable additional information related to the advertising message. A pre-test was conducted to select the most appropriate commercial. 18 respondents saw four different ads for public services. An ad was selected with an average involvement and likeability level, and that was widely known. A commercial for the selective use of antibiotics was selected. The message is about the selective use of antibiotics given the threat for immunity of antibiotics over time.

The respondents were recruited by an online market research company. There were 208 participants of which 55.8% were male. The average age of the respondents was 43 (range 17-62). The respondents received an email with a link to the stimuli, followed by the questionnaire. Individuals were randomly assigned to the different conditions.

Measures
Self-reported attention to the interactive part of the ad was measured by the 5-items scale of Laczniaik, Muehlng, and Grossbart (1989) (α=.915). The evaluation of the ad message was measured by an adjusted attitude toward the brand scale of Holbrook and Batra (1987) (α=.951). The number of clicks per individual was automatically registered. Given that involvement is an important antecedent of attention paid to the content, the involvement with the ad message of the 30″ ad was included as a covariate. It was measured by the scale of Cox and Cox (2001) (α=.916).

Results and Discussion
The general model is significant (Wilks’ Lambda <.001) for the two dependent variables (MANCOVA); attention paid to the interactive ad and the amount of clicks in the interactive ad. The involvement with the 30″ advertisement is a significant covariate for the two dependent variables (Wilks’ Lambda <.001). Also the interaction effect showed multivariate significance (Wilks’ Lambda =.016). Based on a separate ANOVA, the interaction-effect of context modality and representation of the interactive ad (text only vs. text with pictures) on attention to the persuasive information was significant (F(1, 4,708), p=.031; See fig.1).

There was no difference in attention to the interactive information between the auditory and the audiovisual context when the information in the interactive ad was only textual (M auditory=2.905 versus M audiovisual=2.986, t=.554, p=.581). When the information in the interactive part of the ad contained text combined with pictures, the auditory programme context resulted in enhanced attention to the interactive information compared to the audiovisual programme context (M auditory=3.1617 versus M audiovisual=2.7611, t=2.238, p=.028).

The interaction effect of context modality and representation format of the interactive ad on the amount of clicks in the additional information was significant and showed the same pattern as the
results of the self-reported attention to the ad information (F (1, 5.393), p=.021; See fig.2). When the information was only textually available, there was no difference in click behaviour according to the modality of the programme context (M auditory=6.475 versus M audiovisual=6.930, t=.375, p=.708). It appeared that the audiovisual programme context distracted the user to the same extent as the auditory programme context. When the verbal information was represented by text and pictures, the participants clicked on more information when the programme context was auditorily present, than when it was represented audiovisually (M auditory=10.766 versus M audiovisual=6.417, t=2.684, p=.009). Since we expected that the auditory programme context would interfere to a larger
extent with the ad than the audiovisual programme context, it can be concluded that H1 is partly supported for the attention devoted to the advertisement and the amount of clicks in the ad.

For the attitude toward the message (Cf. RQ1), the interaction-effect was not significant (F (1, .713), p=.400). This can be explained by referring to Kisielius and Sternthal (1986). They argue that a null effect of text combined with pictures on attitudinal explained by referring to Kisielius and Sternthal (1986). They argue to the advertisement and the amount of clicks in the ad.

EXPERIMENT 2

In experiment 2 the role of thematic (in)congruency of the media context and the interactive ad is investigated in combination with the user motivation that drives the interactive behaviour (goal-directed versus experiential). This experiment focuses on semantic interference and reinforcement.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

Cognitive priming (e.g., Herr 1989) and semantic interference (e.g., Burke and Srull 1988) both relate to the incongruity literature (e.g., Mandler 1982). This framework states that congruent stimuli compete for attention and may therefore interfere with each other, which inhibits the retrieval of separate information items (Kumar 2000). In line with this, the incongruity theory postulates that incongruent information attracts the attention, and triggers elaboration, due to its discrepancy in meaning between the stimuli. Although incongruent information may increase the attention to the stimuli, it may lead to more negative evaluations of the stimuli because of the lack of fit between the stimuli. Because congruent information fits more into the consumer’s category schema than incongruent information, congruent information is seen in a more favourable light than incongruent information. This is in line with the priming literature, in which a specific context can serve as a primer to make consumers more susceptible to a certain advertisement, as a result of which the advertisement is evaluated more positively (e.g., Poncin, Pieters and Ambaye 2006). Research has demonstrated that the priming mechanism can be moderated by several situational and individual characteristics (e.g., Wheeler and Berger 2007). The influence of personal goals of the individuals to interact with the ad is investigated as a moderator here.

Interactive behaviour has been characterized according to two task motivations, experiential and goal-directed (e.g., Hoffman and Novak 1996). Goal-directed activities reflect purposive, task-specific behaviour which is driven by an extrinsic motivation of the user (Novak, Hoffman, and Duhachek 2003). Experiential activities are characterized by a more intrinsic motivation of the user who browses a website in a relatively unstructured manner without any specific goal. Huang (2006) postulates that goal directed behaviour requires users to focus their attention on the goal to complete it. Experiential users are less likely to focus their attention on any specific informational cue.

The main focus of this second experiment is the interaction effect between the users’ goals and the programme (in)congruency. Goal-directed individuals are focused on their primary goal, and therefore are less likely to devote cognitive resources to processing task-irrelevant information. Based on the incongruency literature, a thematic congruent context attracts less attention than an incongruent context. Therefore, goal-directed individuals are less likely to be distracted from their primary task when the programme context is congruent compared to when it is incongruent. When the context is incongruent with the interactive ad, more attention and elaboration is necessary to encode and dissolve the incongruent context. When the user has an experiential goal to browse through information in the interactive ad, he/she is not focused on any specific information. Therefore, their attention might more likely be drawn to the programme context. This implies that less attention is focused on the primary task of browsing in the advertisement. When the context is thematically congruent with the interactive ad, processing the context in combination with the ad is easy because congruent cognitive schemas are activated. Therefore, individuals will pay less attention to the interactive ad when the context is congruent than when it is incongruent. Because attention is highly correlated with the interactive behaviour of individuals, we expect the same results for the attention paid to the information and the amount of clicks in the information. Therefore, we expect:

H2a: For goal directed individuals, thematic congruency between the context and the ad will lead to a higher degree of self-reported attention to and a higher number of clicks in the interactive ad compared to thematic incongruency. For experiential individuals, thematic congruency between the context and the ad will lead to a lower degree of self-reported attention to and a higher number of clicks in the additional information than in case of thematic incongruency.

Based on the cognitive priming principle and the incongruency literature, thematically congruent information is processed with more ease and confidence than incongruent information. However, for goal-directed individuals, a thematically congruent context might confuse them, because they may perceive the congruent context as part of their search task. This increase in the complexity of the search task for goal-directed users might lead to a more negative evaluation of the information (Nadkami and Gupta 2007). When the context is incongruent with the target-information, it might be clearer that the context is irrelevant for the search task of the goal-directed user. For experiential users, the cognitive priming principle applies. Because these users hold no specific goals, the thematic congruent context which leads to a fit with the activated cognitive structures, will lead to a positive effect on the attitude toward the message. Therefore, we expect:

H2b: For goal directed individuals, thematic congruency between the context and ad will lead to a more negative evaluation of the ad message than an incongruent context. For experiential individuals, thematic congruency between the content and ad will lead to a more positive evaluation of the ad message than thematic incongruency.

Method

Stimuli and participants

A 2 (programme context) x 2 (user goals) factorial design was used. The same 30” commercial of study 1 was used, with an integrated call-to-action followed by an interactive information part with clickable information. The lay out of the interactive part was a combination of text and pictures and was the same across conditions. The audiovisual context appeared simultaneously with the interactive information on screen using a picture-in-picture technology. The thematically incongruent programme context was the same sequence as in the first experiment. For the thematically congruent programme context, a sequence featuring patients in a hospital who received medication was selected.

The search goals of the users were manipulated by using different “call-to-actions”. To evoke a goal-directed motivation to search in the information, a promotional incentive was embedded...
Simultaneous Exposure to Television Programming and Advertising Content in an Interactive Context

The experiential motivation was induced by inviting the viewer to view more information ("Click here for more information"). The stimuli were distributed using the internet, similar as in experiment 1. An online market research company recruited 133 respondents of which 48.9% were male. The average age of the respondents was 40 (range 18-56). They received an email with a link to the stimuli, followed by the questionnaire. The respondents were randomly assigned across the different conditions.

Measures
The same three dependent variables as in experiment 1 were measured using the same scales. (Self-reported attention, $\alpha = .909$; Evaluation of the ad message, $\alpha = .956$). The amount of clicks was automatically registered. Similar as in experiment 1, the involvement with the ad message of the 30" ad was included as a covariate and measured by the scale of Cox and Cox (2001; $\alpha = .918$).

Results and Discussion
The general model was significant (Wilks' Lambda < .001) for the two related dependent variables: attention and amount of clicks in the interactive ad (using MANCOVA). The involvement with the 30" advertisement was a significant covariate (Wilks' Lambda < .001). Also the interaction effect showed multivariate significance (Wilks' Lambda = .017). A separate ANOVA demonstrated that the interaction effect of context congruency and users' goal on attention to the persuasive information was significant ($F (1, 3.956), p = .049$; See fig. 3).

For the goal-directed users the thematically congruent context lead to a higher level of self-reported attention to the interactive ad compared to the thematically incongruent context ($M$ incongruent $= 2.842$ versus $M$ congruent $= 3.394, t = 2.476, p = .016$). For the experiential users, the impact of the type of context had no influence on the attention to the persuasive information ($M$ incongruent $= 2.925$ versus $M$ congruent $= 2.972, t = .306, p = .765$). The interaction effect of both independent variables on clicking behaviour was not significant ($F (1, 2.567), p = .112$). H2a is partly supported. Apparently, for experiential users, the attention paid to the interactive information is independent of the (in)congruency of the programme context. For goal-directed users, the hypothesis was supported. In the incongruent programme condition, goal-directed users were less distracted by the incongruent programme context, which allowed them to pay more attention to the interactive information in the ad, than in the congruent programme context condition.

An additional ANOVA showed that the interaction effect between context congruency and user goals on the attitude toward the message was significant ($F (1, 5.388), p = .022$; See fig. 4). For goal-directed users, the context (in)congruency has no effect on the evaluation of the message ($M$ incongruent $= 3.689$ versus $M$ congruent $= 3.648, t = .161, p = .873$). For experiential users, the thematically congruent context generated a more positive message evaluation than the incongruent context ($M$ incongruent $= 3.336$ versus $M$ congruent $= 3.903, t = 2.203, p = .023$). H2b is partly supported. These results show that for experiential users a congruent programme context, which makes it easy to process the persuasive message and which is in line with the activated schemas, lead to a more positive evaluation of the message than the incongruent programme context. For the goal-directed users, apparently, the (in)congruency of the programme context had no effect on the attitude toward the message.

Not finding a similar interaction effect on the amount of clicks in the persuasive, interactive information was unexpected. A possible explanation could be that the dual task or distraction of the audiovisual programme context reduced the cognitive resources to the same level for the goal-directed and experiential users. Attention paid to the interactive ad probably requires less cognitive resources compared to clicking on the information.
CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The focus of this study was perceptual and semantic interference and reinforcement mechanisms when simultaneously showing information in an interactive television setting. In experiment 1, perceptual interference and reinforcement was investigated by manipulating the representation format of the information in the interactive ad (text vs. text and pictures) in combination with the modality of the programme context (auditory vs. audiovisual). The results show that the interaction effect of both variables had no effect on the attitude toward the message. Not finding an effect on the message attitude can be explained by referring to the vividness literature, where the impact of vivid information (containing pictures etc.) on the evaluation process is not always apparent (Fortin and Dholakia 2005). Further research should investigate the impact of perceptual interference and reinforcement on the evaluation of the stimuli more in depth. For the attention paid to and the amount of clicks in the interactive ad, both variables showed a significant interaction effect. When the information was represented by text and pictures, the auditory programme context interfered less with the advertising message than the audiovisual programme context, leading to a higher level of attention paid to and more clicks in the interactive ad. Although we also expected that in case the information in the interactive ad was only textual, the audiovisual programme context would interfere less with the advertising message than the audiovisual programme context, leading to a higher level of attention paid to and more clicks in the interactive ad. Although we also expected that in case the information in the interactive ad was only textual, the audiovisual programme context would interfere less with the advertising message than the audiovisual programme context, the results did not support this expectation. A possible reason for not finding this effect can be found in the dual coding theory. When information is represented by different modalities it is easier to process compared to when only one modality is activated. Therefore, processing the auditory programme context may be more difficult than processing the audiovisual programme context. On the other hand, competing stimuli within the same modality, e.g., visual text and (audio)visual programming, decrease the processing of both. This can be an explanation why both types of programmes have an equal influence on the attention paid to the interactive ad and the amount of clicking in the interactive ad. To conclude, when the information is represented by different systems, text (verbal system) and pictures (nonverbal system), auditory stimuli will distract the individual less than audiovisual stimuli. When the information is represented by text only, with less differential cues, auditory and audiovisual interference do not differ. In experiment 2, the semantic (in)congruency of the programme context and the interactive ad was manipulated in combination with the motivation (goal-directed versus experiential) of individuals to interact with the interactive ad. The results show that for goal-directed individuals the congruent programme distracted them less from the interactive ad than the incongruent programme, leading to a higher degree of attention paid to the interactive ad. This is in line with the incongruency theory (Mandler 1982) that states that incongruent information attracts more attention than congruent information. For experiential users the interaction effect was not significant. With respect to the attitude toward the message, the congruent programme context lead to a more positive effect than the incongruent programme context for individuals with an experiential motivation. This is in line with the cognitive priming theory (Herr 1989). For goal-directed individuals there was no significant effect of the (in)congruency of the context on the ad message evaluation. Apparently, for goal-directed individuals the type of programme context had an equal effect on the evaluation of the advertising message. To conclude, for goal-directed users, the (in)congruency of the programme context has an influence on the division of their attention, but not on the evaluation of the information, and vice versa, for experiential users, the (in)congruency has no impact on the division of their attention, but influences the formation of the evaluation of the information.

This study has limitations that provide some possibilities for further research. First, the advertising message was for a non-profit public service. Further research could replicate this study for commercial products. Secondly, the attention paid to the interactive ad and the amount of clicks in the interactive ad, were measured as...
process variables. Further research should incorporate memory related dependent variables, which can grasp additional aspects of the interference and reinforcement mechanisms. Third, not finding an effect of the perceptual interference or reinforcement on the attitude towards the message, can be explained by the fact that the pictures were not directly related to the advertising message, but to the different message arguments. Further research should investigate the aspects of representation format and vividness of interactive ads more in depth. Fourth, the attention allocation was measured by means of self-reported measures. Although, this might give a good indication, further research could, for instance, use eye-tracking to observe the attention allocation more validly. Finally, the use of the Internet in this study decreased the artificial character of the experiment and increased the external validity. However, the experiment should be replicated in a real-life or experimental IDTV context.

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Customer’s Evaluation of the Service Quality of the Appliance Sales Departments of Retail Stores in a South African Context
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ABSTRACT
This study investigates consumers’ perception of the service quality in appliance departments in major retail stores in an emerging economy to ascertain whether the service supports informed, responsible buyer behavior as to a complex product category. Consumers completed a total of 296 questionnaires immediately after closure of a purchase transaction in 20 stores of five retail chains in Gauteng, RSA. Factor analysis of data indicated a collapse of the original five dimensional SERVQUAL scale into two dimensions. This suggests a more generalized judgment of SQ in this context. Low mean scores in the product knowledge tests contradict above average positive judgments for both dimensions of SQ. Findings confirm the challenges faced by retail due to a paradoxical situation where retail thrives on positive SQ judgments despite critical shortcomings in their service offering.

INTRODUCTION AND JUSTIFICATION
Services in retail have apparently been neglected for some time (Calif, 2001; Dawson, 2005; Gowan et al., 2001) notwithstanding evidence of increased consumer dissatisfaction. The American Customer Satisfaction Index (University of Michigan) reported a decrease of twelve percent in customers’ satisfaction with services in retail in the USA between 1996 and 2001 and indications are that customers are no longer loyal to a specific store as a direct consequence of unsatisfactorily customer service (Gowan et al., 2001).

Attempts to improve customer service in contexts where retail stores have to address the needs of diverse consumers, are even more challenging. Department stores in South Africa e.g. have to take into consideration that the country acknowledges eleven official languages and that customers who patronize these stores come from different backgrounds. Customers of department stores vary from sophisticated middle to higher income groups whose product needs may be very similar to those of consumers in first world countries, to more vulnerable consumers from lower socio-economic groups who strongly depend on in store customer services to facilitate their buyer decisions (Internet: Executive Briefing: South Africa:35–40). Dramatic socio-political changes in South Africa since 1994 have allowed major changes in the life styles and living conditions of millions of previously disadvantaged citizens: middle-income earners have increased as a result of increased educational status, better job opportunities and higher earnings and have contributed to the country’s biggest economic wave yet (Black middle class on the rise, 2004; Wortley and Tshwaedi, 2002). In this emerging economy, many households can thus now afford products and services such as home ownership, electricity and household appliances that they have had limited exposure to, and experience with in the past.

A key concern within the discipline of Consumer Science is these consumers’ inability to make responsible, informed buyer decisions where complex, durable products are concerned, bearing in mind the financial- and long term implications of high risk buyer decisions, consumers’ limited product related consumer socialization and their consequent inadequate product knowledge and experience (Erasmus et al., 2005). Another concern is that the local white-goods industry in South Africa and elsewhere in Africa is predominantly import-orientated. Refrigeration equipment worth 630 million US$ were imported by RSA in 2001 (19.7% more than the previous year). Whirlpool (US); LG Electronics (South Korea); Samsung (South Korea) and Carrier (US) are brand leaders in the country at present (Internet: Executive Briefing: South Africa:35–40). Global influences thus enable exposure to products and brands that compare favorably with that of affluent first world countries although consumers are not necessarily competent to make informed buyer decisions or responsible product judgments. Retail, especially department stores that target middle and lower income groups, therefore has a major responsibility to support and facilitate consumers’ buyer decisions.

Consumers with limited product related consumer socialization apparently tend to rely on cues such as store image, brands and salespeople to determine product quality and to conclude product decisions (Erasmus et al., 2005; John, 1999). More experienced consumers, on the other hand, apply product and brand information that is based on personal experience in different usage situations. The household appliance industry is however characterized by continual and rapid change in technology and sophistication in design. Despite extensive experience even more experienced consumers may thus experience confusion when confronted with product alternatives in the store (Wingo, 1996).

Service quality (SQ) in retail has thus become crucial in terms of the potential to facilitate consumers to conclude informed, responsible buyer decisions. The idea that SQ needs to be defined within context, and the notion that different countries should refrain from a standardized marketing approach, has been raised before (Williams, 2003; Winsted, 1997) as a result of significant differences between the perception and practical implementation of the dimensions of SQ between developed and developing countries (Malhotra et al., 1994). In developed countries, service reliability for example evolves around consistent, dependable and accurate service performance, while human related aspects, i.e. the assistance of personnel seems more crucial in developing countries. It is also proposed that consumers with lower education levels prefer familiar products and have lower quality expectations. They unfortunately thus demonstrate more tolerance for ineffective services, compared to consumers in developed countries or more experienced, sophisticated consumers who patronize the same store (Henry and Caldwell, 2006).

Most of what have been published on customer service and related topics in various accredited journals during the past two decades reflect upon scenarios in first world circumstances and generally only emphasize a particular aspect of customer service such as price. Research on the sales of household appliances that represent a category of complex, durable and expensive merchandise are equally limited despite the fact that globalization has enabled the proud presentation of sophisticated household technology to all corners of the globe–even to consumers who regretfully do not necessarily possess the product knowledge or experience to handle buyer decisions (Erasmus et al., 2005).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES
In South Africa, that characterizes an emerging economy, consumers in middle and lower income groups frequent major department stores for many commodities such as major household appliances. These channels thus have to deal with third world
elements as well as characteristics of a sophisticated first world environment. The objective of this research is to investigate consumers’ perception of SQ in this context in order to identify shortcomings in the service offering that could be augmented in lieu of the seemingly paradoxical situation where the supply of appliances in retail and consumers’ ability to conclude informed responsible buyer decisions when confronted with the broad selection of major household appliances, are incongruent.

This study thus answers the following questions:

Considering a very similar service offering by various department stores (in South Africa) and that consumers in emerging economies not necessarily have alternative frames of reference to facilitate or impede their judgment of an in store buyer experience: What is customers of major department stores’ perception of the SQ of the appliance sales departments of these stores?

Based on evidence that men tend to be more involved and even more skeptical when sophisticated technology and more expensive products are involved: Does gender have a significant influence on consumers’ judgment of the SQ of appliance sales departments?

Based on the notion that consumers who have had more extensive first hand experience with appliances might challenge the in store service offering more severely: Is consumers’ judgment of the SQ of appliances sales departments significantly influenced by personal experience with appliances in their own households?

Based on the notion that consumers with more extensive product knowledge might be more inquisitive about the service offering: Is consumers’ judgment of the SQ of appliances sales departments significantly influenced by their knowledge of the functional and performance attributes of appliances?

Is consumers’ judgment of the SQ significantly influenced by the difficulty experienced during the buying encounter?

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Service Quality Defined

More recent literature define service quality (SQ) as a simple, primarily cognitive, evaluative and objective construct (Shenwell et al., 1998) while former definitions include attitude formation that results as a consequence of consumers’ comparisons between their expectations and their perception of the actual service performance in the retail context (Bahia and Nantel, 2000; Cronin et al., 2000; Parasuraman et al., 1985; Zeithaml et al., 1996). There is ample empirical support for SQ as an antecedent of customer satisfaction (Anderson et al., 1994; Oliver et al., 1997; Parasuraman et al., 1988) that involves a type of attitude that will predict future and repurchases intentions (Clarke, 2001). SQ is also viewed as a hypothetical construct that is instrumental in consumers’ efforts to minimize perceived risk: it comprises of two concepts, namely quality in fact and quality in perception. Quality in fact is achieved when an organization does what it sets out to do. Quality in perception occurs when the organization’s overall excellence is judged within a consumer’s expectations (Kang, 2006). SQ is eventually determined by the evidence, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy of the actual shopping experience that occurs in interaction with customers (Shenwell et al., 1998); it is judged by a consumer during a service (process quality) as well as after the service has been concluded, i.e. “output quality” (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Turley, 1990).

Dimensions/ Elements Of Service Quality

SQ per se has been a topic of investigation for some time and efforts to explain and define the concept confirm the complexity of the construct. SQ inter alia involves structure, i.e. referral to the physical environment and physical facilities that forms part of the service encounter as well as process that involves the interaction with service personnel in the store. SQ further involves technical quality (what is done) and functional quality (how it is done) (Grönroos, 1988). The “Nordic school” specifies six areas for the judgment of SQ, i.e.: professionalism and skills; attitudes and behaviour; accessibility and flexibility; reliability; recovery reputation; control (Turley, 1990). Sureshchandar et al. (2002) however propose that five factors are critical in terms of SQ from customers’ point of view, i.e.: core service; the human element—and the systematization of service delivery (the non-human element); tangibles of service; and social responsibility.

Service marketing literature specify four essential components of the measurement of SQ that will explain why SQ may be rated high while it is not necessarily impressive, or the contrary, i.e.: perception, prior experience/ expectation and importance (Clarke, 2001) as well as perishability that accounts for intangibility and inseparability (Vandamme and Leunis, 1993).

The importance of Service Quality

SQ differentiates one service provider from another (Dabholkar et al., 1996). A positive SQ judgment inevitably encourages repeat purchase behaviour and an increase in a store’s profitability (Townsend and Gebhardt, 1988). From retailers’ point of view, a positive SQ judgment is considered essential for success and survival in a competitive environment (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Rust et al., 2000). In order to improve its service offering, a store has to pursue a goal of zero defects through the implementation of better systems, better staff, improved internal marketing, enhanced involvement of customers, “pleasant-to-patronage” premises, better relationships among staff on all levels (Townsend and Gebhardt, 1988), superior after sales service and-complaint handling (Gummesson, 1988). Indications are that financial investments that are made to upgrade a store’s SQ are worth while: consumers in Europe are apparently more concerned with quality and are more than willing to pay more for it (Turley, 1990).

Evaluation Of Service Quality

SQ is an elusive concept that is measured in terms of perception, prior experience/expectation and importance (Clarke, 2001). Because of the intangibility, heterogeneity and the inseparability of the various elements of customer service, SQ is difficult to evaluate (Berry and Parasuraman, 1991). Parasuraman and co workers’ (1985) Service Quality Model (SERVQUAL) is based on the comparison of perceived performance with expected performance on the basis of the disconfirmation paradigm. The initial purpose of SERVQUAL was to diagnose and uncover broad areas of a company’s SQ shortfalls and strengths regarding executive perceptions of SQ as well as tasks associated with service delivery to consumers. SERVQUAL’s in fact measures perceived quality, i.e. an attitude that is related but not necessarily equivalent to consumer satisfaction. Despite SERVQUAL’s extensive implementation in retail, objections to its focus on the service delivery process and an apparent neglect of technical quality (Kang, 2006; Grönroos, 1988). The adapted version of the SERVQUAL scale (Dabholkar et al., 1996) was thus chosen as a diagnostic tool for this research project because of its specific application for retail settings where a mix of merchandise and services are offered. This scale proposes a hierarchical factor structure with five dimensions that are considered central to SQ, i.e.: Physical aspects, Reliability, Personal interaction, Problem solving and Policy. Three of these dimensions are more complex and contain sub-dimensions that combine related attributes. The scale provides opportunity to analyze SQ at the
overall level (using the full scale in an additive fashion) as well as dimension quality (using items within a dimension in an additive fashion) whereby specific problem areas could be detected.

It is postulated that consumers in developed and developing countries judge SQ differently: consumers in developed countries are apparently satisfied with SQ when the service offering extends benefits beyond the functional, i.e. when it is more intangible than the core service. Consumers in developing countries, however, due to personality factors that are shaped by culture related characteristics and philosophy of life tend to focus on the core benefits of the service, thus the functional aspects in their choice criteria. They would typically also consider choice alternatives in terms of product ranges second to the importance of the human touch of the service; indicate lower quality expectations and show a wider zone of tolerance for ineffective services, compared to consumers in developed countries. Consumers in developing countries thus show a higher regard for personnel in terms of a positive SQ judgment while consumers in developed countries regard time related aspects more important, i.e. responsiveness through effective, correct transactions and competency of personnel (Malhotra et al., 1994).

**Shortcomings in the offering of Service Quality**

SQ is unfortunately not necessarily regarded top priority in every retail setting. Errors are sometimes considered inevitable, even expected. Various shortcomings may obstruct optimal service delivery, e.g.: a gap between customers’ expectations and management’s perceptions and specifications of SQ; a misinterpretation of customers’ expectations of SQ specifications; consumers’ risk perception; a gap between SQ specifications and actual service delivery (e.g. an inability of employees to meet set service performance standards for whatever reason); inadequate resources and poor external communication that cause a discrepancy between the actual service and the promised service (Zeithaml et al., 1990). Although a store’s sales figures and reputation are bound to benefit from an excellent SQ judgment, it unfortunately not necessarily induces informed responsible consumer decision-making. Within the systems perspective (Spears and Gregoire, 2003:5) one may reason that consumers interpret attributes/elements of a service offering in a hierarchical order and that certain shortcomings may be compensated for by other elements of the service offering that are perceived to be exceptional. Poor sales personnel, which is essential to facilitate inexperienced consumers during a buying encounter, may thus be negated by an impressive visual in store display of appliances, exceptional price offerings etc. In addition to an overall SQ judgment, a store thus also needs to attend to consumers’ judgment of the individual dimension/elements of SQ to fully identify specific shortcomings and strengths.

**The importance of SQ in the context of appliance sales**

Household appliances are regarded as complex, high-risk purchases because they are relatively expensive, durable and involve technological features that change too frequently to keep track of easily (Wingo, 1996). Buyer decisions may thus incur lengthy pre purchase deliberation and may create a considerable amount of confusion and tension, especially for less experienced consumers (Beatty, 1996; Buttle, 2004:15; Cronin et al., 2000; Erasmus et al., 2005). An informed, responsible buyer decision requires that a consumer at least becomes acquainted with the basic functional and performance attributes of an appliance; has a realistic service life expectancy; accepts responsibility for correct installation, use and maintenance procedures and acknowledges the stipulations of the guarantee and after sales service.

Benefits of appliances that are considered during the pre purchase stage involve utilitarian, i.e. objective, economic, rational and functional attributes as well as hedonic (abstract) benefits that arise from experiential, abstract, subjective, emotional, symbolic, sensory, non-rational and aesthetic attributes (Buttle, 2004:26; Sweeney et al., 1999; Sarin et al., 2003). In emerging economies, visual consumption, i.e. the intentional acquisition of commodities for their symbolic value, e.g. to indicate social status may be regarded of greater importance than the design and/or functional attributes of a product (East, 1993:19-21; Charon 1979:23; La Rossa and Reitzes, 1993; Malholtra et al., 1994). This challenges the nature of assistance that is required in store and inevitably affects SQ judgments.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Research Setting, Instrument Design, Sample Selection and Data Collection**

The research was executed during May to July 2007. The survey was cross sectional and involved a pre tested structured questionnaire of which three sections are relevant for this report:

1. The adapted SQ scale (Dabholkar et al., 1996) included 28 items that were judged on a 5-point Likert type scale: the top end of the scale represented impressive service. A direct-measure, instead of the two-part measurement approach that requires expectations and perception-minus-expected gap scores, was used. The original wording of the scale was modified in terms of two items that referred to “fitting rooms” and “shopping bags” that could not be associated with the context of an appliance sales department. The inclusion of the SERQUAL scale was to quantify consumers’ judgment of the SQ of the store in terms of overall as well as specific dimensions of the service offering to ultimately diagnose and uncover broad areas of a company’s SQ shortfalls and, as well as tasks are associated with service delivery to consumers (Dabholkar et al., 1996).

2. The product knowledge test comprised of ten statements that pertained to each of five different major appliances: True/False/Not sure discriminations were used. Respondents completed the sub section on the specific appliance that they purchased on that particular day as well as any other two appliances they already owned and were experienced with. Knowledge tests were expected to disclose evidence of consumers’ pre purchase information search and their ability to make informed buyer decisions.

3. Due to the length of the questionnaire, demographic information was limited to age, gender and indication of years of personal experience with appliances in their own households. Respondents were recruited from different stores that were well distributed in the geographical area. It was thus assumed that the sample would represent the typical customer profile of retail stores. Respondents were recruited in prominent department store chains in Gauteng, RSA, that were identified through liaison with industry and through the cooperation of store managers. The research was executed during May to July 2007. The survey was cross sectional and involved a pre tested structured questionnaire of which three sections are relevant for this report:

Respondents were recruited in prominent department store chains in Gauteng, RSA, that were identified through liaison with industry and the cooperation of store managers (Internet: Dion file:/F/Dion%20%20Store%20Locator%20and%20Advert%20Tracker.htm, 2006; Makro, 2006 file://F:Makro.htm). These stores were located in trading areas with generally similar customer profiles, which promised a fair representation of the target group of department stores (Walliman, 2004:276), i.e. lower and middle-income groups of all cultures and different age groups.

Purposive sampling involved the approach of every customer that purchased an appliance in the store on the specific day. Questionnaires were filled in on the spot under supervision of trained co-workers to contextualize respondents in the environment that they were evaluating so that their contributions would reflect on actual, recent experiences for the sake of the credibility of data (Wallendorf and Belk, 1989). Between 15 and 20 questionnaires were completed in any particular store on a specific day. A store was
only visited once to prevent transferal of information amongst customers and/or personnel (Miller et al., 2005).

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Demographic information
A total of 20 stores of five department store chains in Tshwane, RSA were involved in the study. A sample of 331 was obtained of which 296 (201 female (68.3%); 93 male (31.6%); missing: n=2) questionnaires were useful for further analysis: 35 were discarded because they were incomplete in terms of one or more of the sections, i.e. Service Quality (SQ); and/or Product Knowledge (PK) that were fundamental to perform the statistical procedures. Respondents’ age distribution varied from 17 to 73 years: 47 (15.9%) were between 17 and 25 years and 75 (25.3%) were 26 to 35 years (they were expected to be less experienced in terms of the purchasing of appliances and were expected to include first time buyers, as well as those who came to purchase a gift for someone else; 75 (25.3%) were 26 to 35 years. Those that were 36 years and older (36 to 45 years: n=100; 33.8%) (46 to 60 years: n=65; 22.0%) (Above 60 years: n=7; 2.4%) (Missing: n=2; 0.6%) were supposed to be more experienced provided that they have had access to electricity and have owned appliances during the time.

When grouped in terms of their personal experience with appliances in their households, 35 respondents (11.8%) had 0 to 2 years’ and 70 (23.6%) had 3 to 8 years’ experience; 80 (27.0%) had 9 to 15 years’; 62 (20.9%) indicated 16 to 25 years’ and 46 (15.5%) indicated experience in a household of 26 years and more. Respondents with 16 years’ and more experience were expected to include second or third time buyers of appliances, to be more discriminative about the SQ and to be more knowledgeable about product characteristics and basic functional attributes.

Service Quality Redefined
Dabholkar et al.’s (1996) SERVQUAL scale was used to measure customers’ perception of SQ in department stores. A scrutiny of the findings of previous SERVQUAL replication studies (Dabholkar et al., 1996) confirmed the necessity to ascertain the relevance and the reliability of the scale in the context of this research first. The sample’s (N=296) responses to the 28 item multi attribute scale were thus subjected to factor analysis using squared multiple correlations as initial communality estimates with direct oblimin rotation. The following occurred: (1) Contrary to the initial five-dimensional structure, the Scree test verified only two dimensions for this context. These two factors were subjected to oblique rotation. In interpretation of the rotated factor pattern, all items that loaded high on one specific construct but low on the others were identified to produce a factor-loading matrix. (2) Factors that loaded high on more than one factor were removed from the factor-loading matrix, resulting in near-zero correlations between some of the remaining items. This suggested a reduction in the presumed dimensionality of the service-quality domain. (3) Some of the items loaded high onto factors they were not originally assigned to in the original scale, which required a reassignment of some items. The reduction in the number of dimensions/factors from five to two, the deletion of certain items and the intentional reassignment of certain items required a re computation of alphas and item-to-total correlations as well as the reexamination of the factor structure of the reduced item pool. A repeated process revealed a final pool of 25 items.

Only two distinct dimensions that included 12 and 13 attributes respectively were identified and the a priori five dimensional structure of the Dabholkar scale could not be confirmed in the context of this study. Cronbach Alpha coefficients of 0.93 and 0.86 for the respective dimensions suggest acceptable levels of reliability and validity. Table 1 reveals the rotated factor loading matrices and alpha values for the eventual 25-item instrument. Three items of the original scale were eliminated because they were not statistically coherent with the newly identified dimensions and neither did their factor loadings signify another dimension (Table 1).

The newly identified dimensions were labeled according to the interpreted meaning of their respective attributes, namely Supportiveness and Impressiveness. Supportiveness represents an integration of four of the original dimensions in the Dabholkar scale, namely Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy. Six of the twelve attributes signify characteristics of personnel that suggest compassion and effort to assist/support customers’ buyer decisions i.e. presentable, courteous, assertive/confident, capable sales assistants that provide personal attention promptly. The remaining six attributes indicate attention to fundamental aspects of the environment and image, i.e. store layout that reduces effort, assurance of product availability, error free transactions and supplementary items such as documentation that create a good impression. The thirteen attributes that differentiated the second dimension, namely Impressiveness, are associated with above average effort to satisfy consumers’ expectations and to distinguish one store from another. Attributes imply attention to the physical environment to create a modern, visually pleasing, attractive, uncluttered environment where sales personnel are willing, knowledgeable, meticulous in performing transactions and where clients enjoy good after sales service, convenient parking, convenient operation hours and where various payment methods are accepted. Most of the attributes in this dimension originated from two sub dimensions, i.e. Appearance and Convenience that signify Physical aspects in the Dabholkar scale. Means and standard deviations for the newly identified dimensions are presented in Table 1.

Consumers’ judgment of the SQ of the appliance sales departments

The calculated means for the two dimensions of SQ (Supportiveness: 3.88; Impressiveness: 4.08) (Table 1) considering a maximum possible mean of 5.0, suggest an above average positive judgment of both dimensions. Means ranged between 3.56 and 4.08 for items associated with Supportiveness and between 3.77 and 4.40 for descriptors of Impressiveness.

Table 2 indicates that when respondents’ gender; years of personal experience and the difficulty experienced during the buying encounter were considered, the means confirmed an above average positive judgment for both dimensions of SQ irrespective of the factors considered. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicated that respondents’ perception of dimension 1: Supportiveness, was neither significantly influenced by gender, nor by years of personal experience, nor by the difficulty experienced to conclude the buyer decision. The same applied for dimension 2: Impressiveness, in terms of the influence of age and years of personal experience. Those who considered it easy to conclude the buyer decision seemed significantly more impressed with one of the dimensions of SQ, i.e. Impressiveness that suggests particular effort with more sophisticated aspects of SQ.

Consumers’ perception of SQ related to their product knowledge

Mean scores obtained for the various knowledge tests are presented Table 3. Respondents only completed tests on those appliances that they purchased on the particular day of their participation in the study, as well as any other two appliances that they already owned.

The results of the knowledge tests were disappointing, particularly because tests were completed after the in store buying encoun-
ter where consumers were supposed to have gained knowledge through exposure to visual and written stimuli as well as the personal assistance of sales personnel, also because tests were restricted to only those appliances that they had personal experience with. Means ranged from 3.29 (lowest) for dishwashers to 5.46 (maximum) for microwave ovens on a scale of 10. Keeping in mind customers’ positive judgment of the SQ, i.e. an above average judgment of both the dimensions of SQ, it was assumed that respondents’ knowledge of the functional and performance attributes of the appliances would at least be satisfactory and that it

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception Item</th>
<th>Dimension/ Factor 1</th>
<th>Dimension/ Factor 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supplementary items create good impression</td>
<td>0.755</td>
<td>0.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store lay out– easy to find appliances</td>
<td>0.228</td>
<td>0.467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store keeps its promises</td>
<td>0.593</td>
<td>0.168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct transactions the first time</td>
<td>0.823</td>
<td>0.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchandise available when wanted</td>
<td>0.653</td>
<td>0.070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neatly dressed salespeople</td>
<td>0.381</td>
<td>0.229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salespeople instill confidence</td>
<td>0.351</td>
<td>0.204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers trust dealings with store</td>
<td>0.660</td>
<td>0.146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prompt attention to customers</td>
<td>0.597</td>
<td>0.249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal attention</td>
<td>0.973</td>
<td>0.156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courteous salespeople</td>
<td>0.930</td>
<td>0.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salespeople handle complaints themselves</td>
<td>0.760</td>
<td>0.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasing environment</td>
<td>0.484</td>
<td>0.273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern impression</td>
<td>0.106</td>
<td>0.502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visually pleasing impression</td>
<td>0.205</td>
<td>0.314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store lay out– easy to move around</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>0.584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error free sales transactions</td>
<td>0.113</td>
<td>0.531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salespeople have sufficient knowledge</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>0.586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salespeople inform when services will be performed</td>
<td>0.074</td>
<td>0.675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salespeople always willing to help</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store will return or exchange goods</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>0.597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenient parking</td>
<td>0.128</td>
<td>0.590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenient operating hours</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>0.561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepts major credit cards</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>0.562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offers enough credit options</td>
<td>0.126</td>
<td>0.463</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Variance explained</th>
<th>40.0</th>
<th>4.7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach Alpha</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
would suggest an ability to make informed, responsible buyer decisions. It was expected that a positive perception of the SQ would reflect in terms of consumers’ competence during the knowledge tests. The outcome of the knowledge tests however indicates otherwise. Table 4 represents the results of the knowledge test for dishwashers as an example of the tests that respondents were subjected to.

The knowledge tests indicate that, even after exposure to the in store environment and despite positive SQ judgments, consumers’ could not convince that they have the ability to have concluded
informed, responsible buyer decisions. Low Cronbach Alphas are ascribed to low item total correlations.

**DISCUSSION**

An investigation of customers’ perception of the SQ in appliance departments in retail stores first required an evaluation of the chosen Dabholkar SERVQUAL scale in the context of the research. Empirical analysis through implementation of factor analysis revealed a collapse of the original five dimensional scale of into only two distinct dimensions that distinguished between basic attributes of the service offering (dimension 1: Supportiveness) and more sophisticated attributes (dimension 2: Impressiveness). This suggests that, in the context of this setting where customers in an emerging economy were asked to judge the SQ of department stores that are frequented by consumers from a broad socio economic spectrum, the service offering was evaluated on a more integrated level. The collapse of the original five dimensional scale into two dimensions suggests that customers in the context of this research seem less discriminative when judging service delivery. Means calculated for both dimensions of SQ indicate that the service offering (i.e. so-called “quality in perception”) in appliance departments in retail stores largely coincide with customers’ expectations (Kang, 2006). These judgments did not differ significantly when specific variables, i.e. gender, age, personal experience or difficulty experienced during the buying encounter were considered. The situation as is, thus seems conducive for repeat purchase behavior (Townsend and Gebhardt, 1988).

Non-effect of increased experience on consumers’ perception of SQ supports the notion that consumers in emerging economies may judge the service offering from a lower expectations framework. In South Africa, department stores are the main suppliers of major household appliances. Consumers thus form their SQ expectations frameworks within the parameters of what are offered in general. The few up market specialized stores that offer more personalized services are primarily frequented by higher income groups because they stock more expensive brands. Customers who indicated that it was easy to conclude the buyer decision, were significantly more impressed with the second dimension of SQ, i.e. Impressiveness. “Easy to conclude the purchase” does however not necessarily reflect informed, responsible product judgment.

The product knowledge tests revealed that consumers’ knowledge of the functional and performance attributes of the appliances they were supposed to be more familiar with, would not support informed responsible buyer decisions. Mean scores ranged from 3.29 (dishwashers) to 5.46 (microwave ovens) on a scale of 10. Consumers’ limited product knowledge confirms findings of a previous study (Erasmus et al., 2005) although it was hoped that the scores would be higher in this study where consumers were asked to complete the task in the store immediately after they had concluded a purchase. An above average positive judgment of both dimensions of SQ does however not necessarily reflect informed, responsible product judgment.

The situation as is, thus seems conducive for repeat purchase behavior (Townsend and Gebhardt, 1988).

**TABLE 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>% Correct</th>
<th>Item total correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Detergents for dishwashers are more alkaline than washing machine detergents</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If stainless steel cutlery is washed in a dishwasher regularly, it will discolor.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The various washing programmes of a dishwasher require different amounts of detergent.</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Fuzzy logic” indicates that a dishwasher will automatically select an appropriate washing programme based on the type of dishes.</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of salt in a dishwasher is required for sterilization.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer washing programmes also use more water.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The capacity of a dishwasher is indicated in litres.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All dishwashers with a metallic exterior are made of stainless steel.</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The drying elements of modern dishwashers are concealed to prevent electric shocks.</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All dishwashers distribute water from two angles, namely from the bottom and the middle of the machine.</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean for the scale 3.29

Variance 3.47

Standard deviation 1.86

Cronbach Alpha 0.44
(1994), namely that SQ is judged differently in developed and developing countries and that consumers in developing countries are more tolerant of ineffective service delivery, have lower expectations and will probably be satisfied if the core benefits of the service offering is satisfactory. The unfortunate consequence is that retailers could capitalize this “halo” effect and make little effort to improve their service offering.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RETAIL

It is suggested that retailers attend to in store assistance of their customers during the pre purchase phase, despite evidence of positive SQ judgments that may create a halo effect. Specific attention should be given to technical quality (what is done, i.e. intentional provision of product information) and functional quality (how it is done, i.e. empathetic assistance in terms of personal product related needs and requirements). On the positive side, consumers’ already positive perception of sales personnel could be taken advantage of to expand consumers’ frame of reference in terms of product alternatives and product attributes. Non-formal consumer education is required to encourage evaluative rational product judgment based on attributes that would address households’ needs, requirements and preferences on the long term. Sales personnel probably function within an economics perspective where sales, profit and sales incentives dictate their sales operations. Informed, responsible buyer behaviour does however have consequences for proper use and maintenance of appliances that are supposed to have a service life of ten years and more.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The scales used to judge SQ depend on intangibles. In the context of emerging consumer markets where less sophisticated consumers are involved, it might be useful divert the focus to tangible aspects of customer service, i.e. consumers’ judgment of the visible presence and conduct of personnel; the physical environment in terms of store display, product range; availability of product information; customer related needs and requirements. On the positive side, consumers are more tolerant of ineffective service delivery, have lower expectations and will probably be satisfied if the core benefits of the service offering is satisfactory. The unfortunate consequence is that retailers could capitalize this “halo” effect and make little effort to improve their service offering.

QUALITY OF DATA

The questionnaire was pre tested for understandability and to attend to the length of the questionnaire (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:76, 92). The entire research process was planned in advance to enable conditional inter-subjectivity (Stenbacka, 2001). Internal validity, i.e. efforts to establish close interaction with the real phenomena (Gummeson, 2002; Hughes, 2006) and transferability were attended to through recruitment of willing consumers who had just made a purchase at 20 branches of five different department chain stores in Gauteng, a densely populated geographic area to adequately involve representations of the constructions of reality. To prevent misinformation and misrepresentation, data collection was limited to one day per store and completion of questionnaires was done under the supervision of trained assistants who were fluent in at least two of the official languages to provide assistance with the interpretation of scales if necessary (Wallendorf and Belk, 1989). Generalization is restricted to the context of appliance sales departments of major retail channels in South Africa as an example of an emerging economy. The pretence of replication is not offered because control over the research setting would affect the underlying philosophy of this research method, i.e. to purposely select potential customers at point of sale without prior warning (De Ruyter and Schol, 1998).

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Exploring the Role of Retailer Image and Store Brands as Extrinsic Cues in Young Urban Consumers’ Choice of Interior Textile Products

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Alet C. Erasmus, University of Pretoria, Republic of South Africa

ABSTRACT

This exploratory study conducted in the developing context of South Africa describes the role of extrinsic cues relating to the retailer’s image and store brand in young urban consumers’ choice of interior textile products. In adopting a phenomenological approach, rich descriptive data reveals the significance of store atmosphere, price and quality perceptions, product selections and value added services as extrinsic cues. The study also provides clarity on the symbolic expressive roles of retail store brands and illustrates the importance of reference groups as basis for retail brand associations.

INTRODUCTION

Various disciplines have investigated the importance of interior surroundings in contributing to individuals’ sense of well-being. Within the body of consumer research, the value of possessions displayed in these surroundings, both at home and in the workplace, has come under scrutiny. As explained by Belk (1988) the house is a symbolic body for the family and possessions such as furnishings and decorations are used to define the family self for its members. In more recent studies, Tian and Belk (2005) further illustrate the importance of objects displayed in office environments as an expression of self. Although such research is limited in the South African context, several emerging interior furnishing and decorating retail outlets offer some confirmation of an increased awareness among South African consumers of interior surroundings and the possessions displayed in these environments.

At present the South African interior retail market is characterized by store formats that range from smaller speciality outlets to larger department stores that sell national (manufacturer) brands as well as their own private-label merchandise. In certain product categories such as interior textiles (e.g., toweling and bed linen), retail store brands and/or private labels seem to dominate with only a few manufacturer brands included in merchandise assortments. Critical aspects highlighted in this regard for both retailers and manufacturers are the impact of private labels, the role of manufacturer brands as well as the influence of the store itself (as a brand) on consumers’ choice of products (Ailawadi and Keller 2004; Chan, Choi, and Coughlan 2006; Grewal et al., 2004). Of particular interest is the role of these products and the brands under which they are sold on symbolic consumption and social identity (Solomon and Englis 1998).

Research conducted by Escalas and Bettman (2005) demonstrate that consumers would purchase particular brands, in part, to construct their self-concepts, and to convey meanings about their identity to others. Reference groups are said to fulfill a pivotal role in this regard. The question posed is whether such findings are relevant in the South African context and more specifically whether consumers in a developing Third World context such as South Africa would use retailers’ brands of interior merchandise to establish their identities and to convey messages regarding their self-concepts to others. To assume that research findings derived from foreign consumer societies are applicable within the local context may oversimplify matters as South Africa is known for its culturally diverse population with divergent needs and wants that manifest in their buying behavior.

Gaining an enhanced understanding of the role of retail brands in consumers’ selection of products and the possible symbolic expression that accompany such choices may benefit retailers to a large extent. Although retail merchants may have reacted to consumers’ needs for a more expressive interior environment in providing the necessary goods and services, they face several challenges as the market becomes increasingly saturated with new entrants. To remain competitive and profitable, retailers need to build and sustain customer loyalty (Kumar and Shah 2004; Wallace, Giese and Johnson 2004) and establish retail brands that will drive store choice (Ailawadi and Keller 2004). In fact, given the highly competitive nature of the retailing industry, not only in South Africa but also in various international spheres, a recent edition of the Journal of Retailing was devoted to stimulate research on matters associated with the role of a retailer as a brand (Grewal, Levy and Lehmann 2004). To date, these topics remain neglected in the South African retailing and consumer research literature and little is known regarding the interior textile product category, which is dominated by these retailer brands.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several indicators may be used to identify the most suitable product for a specific end use situation. In general, consumers may use a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic variables to evaluate products (Miyazaki, Grewal and Goodstein 2005). Intrinsic attributes may be construed as the tangible component parts of the physical product that contribute to its functional performance and core benefits (Du Plessis and Rousseau 2003; Grohmann, Spangenberg and Sprott 2007). With interior textiles, these features can take the form of details in the making up of the article or performance of the fibers and fabrics (Ashton and Rigby 1996; Elsasser 2004). Yet, in today’s competitive marketing environment most products are worth more than the sum of their physical attributes and the raw materials they consist of. Extrinsic properties then refer to any attributes that are additional to the core benefits (Du Plessis and Rousseau 2003; Miyazaki et al, 2005) and comprise aspects such as price, brand name and a retailer’s reputation (Grohmann et al, 2007, Roggeveen, Grewal and Gotlieb, 2006). These attributes are often used to augment and tailor products to the explicit needs of specific consumer segments. Du Plessis and Rousseau (2003) equate the tailored augmented product to a brand, which is often more significant in the consumer’s mind than the actual physical product. This may also apply to brands which are associated with specific retailers.

Quoting Ailawadi and Keller (2004), “…a retail brand identifies the goods and services of a retailer and differentiates them from those of competitors.” The authors go on to explain that a retailer’s brand equity is very much dependant on the image of the specific retailer in the minds of consumers. In their review of relevant literature, they identify five key dimensions associated with a retailer’s image. These include access, in-store atmosphere, price and promotion, cross category product/service assortment as well as within category brand/item assortment. In a meta-analysis, Pan and Zinkhan (2006) include these dimensions into three broad antecedent categories for retail patronage, namely product-relevant factors (such as product quality, price, and product assortment),...
market-relevant factors (such as store atmosphere, store image, service quality and convenience) and personal factors (such as demographic variables). Ailawadi and Keller (2004) as well as Pan and Zinkman (2006) provide an extensive review of literature on these factors and dimensions. For the purposes of this review only a few aspects are highlighted that carry particular significance for the interior retailing sphere.

Several authors confirm the importance of physical aspects pertaining to the store-atmosphere (Ailawadi and Keller 2004; Barnes and Ward 1995; Grewal, Baker, Levy and Voss 2003) in contributing to patronage intentions and consumer inferences about a store’s merchandise, service, prices and the like. Pan and Zinkman (2006) differentiates store image from store atmosphere, by explaining that whereas the latter primarily accounts for the physical attributes in a store environment, store image is more closely related to the shopper’s perception of the store environment. It is argued that both constructs are of particular importance for interior retail outlets. Furnishings and decorations were found to exert a strong symbolic and expressive influence in interior environments (Belk 1988; Solomon and Englis 1998). Consumers might thus not merely buy in a passive manner what retailers offer them, but instead, actively select and use products and brands that would shape their own realities and express themselves visually. It is therefore argued that the visual stimuli and physical display of merchandise in an interior retail outlet may be of fundamental importance in convincing consumers of the offering’s ability to reinforce social identity and membership in specific “taste cultures” (Solomon and Englis 1998) as well as its relevance in the personalization of interior space.

To acknowledge in this regard is that interior retail merchants may become the purveyors of expressive symbols. Merchandise such as interior textile products may exist in physical form, but they may also become social objects when given meaning through social interaction with others such as reference groups (Charon 2001). Escalas and Bettmann (2005) investigated the role of reference groups as a source of brand meaning. They conclude that if reference groups use and become associated with particular brands (including retail brands), such meaning may be appropriated by consumers to construct their self-concepts. The effect is however moderated by the degree to which the brand is symbolic and communicate something about the user, as well as the degree to which it is socially visible, consumed publicly and considered less of a necessity (Batra and Homr 2004; Escalas and Bettman 2005).

Taking all of the above into account, retailers’ ability to use emotional appeals and desired images embodied by their brands can form an important competitive advantage. As explained by Gad (2001), until the 1950s, the perceived benefit or functional dimension of a product in terms of intrinsic quality and efficiency was mostly what was communicated about the brand. In an attempt to differentiate products, the social dimension became important. This dimension reflects the relationship between consumers and groups of people to which they want to belong and the use of brands as symbols to gain membership in such groups. The third brand quality proposed by Gad (2001) is the mental dimension, which relates to how consumers perceive brands as extensions of their own personalities. It is however debatable whether South African interior retail merchants have succeeded in differentiating themselves to such an extent and whether consumers in a developing Third World context such as South Africa are influenced by extrinsic cues surrounding the retailers’ image and brand of interior merchandise. Moreover, the extent to which they use such brands to establish their identities and convey messages regarding the self to others remains, to date, questionable.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

A limited understanding and lack of empirical findings pertaining to consumers’ choice of interior textile products inspired a qualitative research design with the intention of exploring and describing the phenomenon (Leedy and Ormrod 2005). A phenomenological approach was adopted, as it was considered the most appropriate method of providing an in-depth understanding of the consumer’s viewpoint on retailers’ images and brands. Purposive sampling was used to recruit a carefully selected sample of participants in Gauteng. This region is predominantly urban, has a high percentage of new housing developments (DuPlessis and Rousseau 2003) and is characterized by a high concentration of interior retail outlets.

**Sample**

As explained by Leedy and Ormrod (2005) phenomenological studies depend on lengthy discussions and consequently the typical sample size would range from five to 25 individuals. A group of nine females and six males voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. Observation of individuals in interior retail outlets ensured that potential participants had some experience in the selection and purchasing of interior textile products. Potential participants were approached and requested to fill in a short questionnaire to establish demographic data and contact details to enable the selection of a homogenous group in a purposeful manner.

The focus remained on financially independent consumers between the ages of 25 and 35 (irrespective of marital status and cultural background), who were either in the process of acquiring their own living quarters in more affluent residential areas or have done so within recent years. As pointed out by Belk (1988), the more recently dwellings are acquired and furnished, the more strongly it is valued by the inhabitants. An assumption underlying the recruitment of individuals in this geographical location is that they would fall within a higher social strata, have regular access to a wider scope of interior retail outlets and could afford to choose from a wider range of products and stores to meet aspirational needs, if any.

**Data collection**

Three data collection sessions were scheduled, each extending between two to three hours and involving various qualitative techniques:

**Session one:** A focus group session following a phenomenological approach was used to stimulate active discussions. Focus group discussions were considered ideal for the purpose of discussing, debating and sharing opinions and ideas on the phenomenon in group context (Babbie and Mouton 2001). Carefully pre-mediated questions based upon the objectives of the study were used to direct discussions (Macun and Posel 1998). Data collection procedures were successful in prompting spontaneous discussions to generate relevant, rich data. Participants co-operated enthusiastically and the role of the researcher was reduced to initiating discussions and to explain specific tasks.

**Session two:** For the purpose of triangulation the same participants were subjected to a projective technique in conjunction with a second focus group discussion. Through a projective technique the “position of the product in the mind, in terms of its value to the consumer, can be detected” (DuPlessis and Rousseau 2003; Maison, Greenwald and Bruin, 2004). An insurance claim scenario was sketched and participants had to describe in written form how they would go about to replace lost towels and bed linen with certain conditions stipulated: a specific amount of money was allowed and participants had to select a preferred retail outlet/s, motivating their
decisions. Afterwards, the group was asked to discuss the task. The discussion was recorded for transcription to verify data obtained in session one.

Session three: During the third engagement participants took part in blind- and branded product testing. As noted by Maison et al. (2004), perceptions of intrinsic product features can depend on whether a product test is blind. The tests thus reflect the manner in which brand images can influence perceptions of otherwise near-identical products. Limited details concerning the purpose of the exercise were provided initially to improve the scientific quality of the data gathered. Participants were however properly debriefed afterwards. The group was confronted with actual products sourced from various retail outlets. During the blind test the brands, trademarks and packaging were removed. Having debated and discussed the options, they had to indicate and motivate the items they preferred. The task was then repeated in the form of a brand test with the identical items of which the packaging, brand names and trademarks were left intact. Certain key questions were asked based on participants’ responses in this test to ensure that data saturation was reached. Concluding questions were asked to bring closure to the group discussions and to enable participants to reflect on previous comments and whether discussions were interpreted correctly.

Data analysis

Extensive notes and recordings of discussions produced a large amount of raw data which needed to be analyzed in such a manner that it would remain true to the phenomenological nature of the study. Thus, all recordings were firstly transcribed verbatim to text and statements communicated in languages other than English were carefully translated to ensure the original meaning was preserved. Where possible the guidelines of De Vos, Strydom, Foucê and Delport (2005) were followed that emphasize the use of Lincoln and Guba’s criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability in addition to criteria advocated by Strauss and Corbin to test the soundness of qualitative data analysis. As an example the use of three data collection techniques produced multiple sets of data which were analyzed separately and then compared for the purposes of triangulation and transferability. During open coding, the researchers continuously suspended prior knowledge on the subject in order to enter the participants’ phenomenological world and understand their ideas, perceptions and experiences. All of the available data was used and at this stage content analysis was applied to scrutinize and organize data within the aims of the study. The next step was to identify the ideas or topics, which appeared repeatedly throughout the transcriptions as general themes. For purposes of analyses, each theme was color-coded and named according to the describing verbatim data. The themes were then listed in tables accompanied by verbatim quotations. All the identified themes were supported by literature and reviewed by a team of experienced researchers. All records including field notes and transcripts were kept for the purposes of conformability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As explained by Leedy and Ormrod (2005): “The actual implementation of a phenomenological study is as much in the hands of the participants as in the hands of the researcher” and “…involves informal conversation, with the participant doing most of the talking and the researcher doing most of the listening.” In following this approach, participants were allowed to communicate and respond spontaneously. Several themes emerged of which most focused on extrinsic cues linked to the retailer brand and store image. A few statements conveying intrinsic features also surfaced and were accommodated to objectively reflect on the collective influence of all attributes and whether extrinsic cues dominate choice behavior or not.

Intrinsic attributes related to the core benefits of interior textile products

Based on prior experiences, participants discussed certain intrinsic features that contribute to the functional purpose of the product, although no mention was made of fiber, yarn or finish that comprise major intrinsic components of textile products (Elsasser 2004). Limited space prevents full disclosure of all transcripts, but in a category such as towels, absorbency was emphasized (“Absorbency is important. You look for a towel that can dry properly”) as well as texture and tactile perception (“If the towel is dense, you get the feeling that it is thick and soft. If it is a thin towel it is not going to draw all the water. You are able to identify the quality there”). Tactile qualities were also noted for bed linen: “In my work I often travel and sleep over at five star hotels. The linen has a certain feel to it which I have not yet come across in the linen they sell in stores”. In a recent study conducted in a more developed market, Grohmann et al. (2007) report on the evaluation of products for which tactile input is diagnostic (i.e., indicative of material properties relevant to the product’s performance) and surmised that retailers can benefit from allowing customers to touch products (especially high quality goods) as it reassures them of the accuracy of their product evaluations. Seemingly, this may also be relevant in the local context.

Tactile input may be of particular value in assessing intrinsically diverse assortments in one particular setting, which may not be as dependant on memory recall. Even so, as exemplified in the blind test it may still not be adequate in comparing and differentiating products from competing offerings that have a high degree of intrinsic parity. When participants were forced to rely on intrinsic cues such as tactile quality to evaluate unmarked products that were sourced from various outlets, but near-identical in terms of thread count, size, fiber content and color, they could not unequivocally agree on specific intrinsic features that differentiated the products. Moreover, those who based their choice on tactile quality could not agree on one superior option.

When the exercise was repeated with branded products, participants were more confident in their evaluation, which was executed in a shorter timeframe, mostly contradicted their choices in the preceding blind test and without fail reverted to the brand as raison d’être: “Most sheets look alike, so I trust Woolworths’ [retailer’s] products for quality”; “When comparing Edgars [retailer] to Woolworths, the ones from Woolworths is definitely better quality” and “I choose the Edgars towel, because, of course, it is from Edgars”. These statements reflect Roggeveen et al.’s (2006) view—expressed within the realm of more developed markets—that with store brand products, the retailer is the brand, and hence the retailer’s reputation is an extrinsic cue that influences consumers’ perceptions of product quality and performance.

Other intrinsic attributes mentioned included physical dimensions (“Size matters… Sheets should fit properly over a mattress”) as well as aesthetic design features, which may be construed as intrinsic properties as they are inherently linked to the physical product (Veryzer, 1995). Features such as color and style (“I look at what it looks like. The color must match with the color scheme in my house”) may be interpreted in an aesthetic and/ or utilitarian manner depending on situational influences (Veryzer, 1995). Yet, regardless of interpretation these aspects were repeatedly linked to retailers’ assortments (“Loads of Living’s [retailer] selection is appealing in terms of color, style, and they also stock extra length sheeting”). Product assortments are extensively cited in the litera-
Extrinsic cues related to the retailer image and store brand

Data derived from all three techniques provide evidence with regard to the role of extrinsic, intangible product attributes related to the retailer image and store brand in participants’ selection of interior textile products. The following statement serves as a typical example: “When you think of items such as towels and linen, you’re immediate thought is to go to Woolworths [retailer] or Edgars [retailer]”. This suggests strong signature associations between the retailer and the product category in question. Although store brands which carry the retailer’s name featured more prominently, certain private label brands of which the name differed from that of the retailer, also gained recognition (even though they did not engender loyalty to the retailer): “There is only one towel for me. I am not an Edgars [retailer] fan. I don’t generally buy there, but for some reason their Private Collection [private label] range stands out. I only go to Edgars for their Private Collection towels”. Apart from private labels, it appears that participants’ store brand preferences are influenced by three dimensions associated with a retailer’s image (store atmosphere, product assortments as well as price and quality perceptions) in addition to certain value added services offered by the retailer.

Physical elements (e.g., design and layout) of a retailer’s in-store atmosphere (Grewal et al. 2003; Keller and Ailawadi 2004; Pan and Zinkman 2006) as well as social aspects such as the type of clientele (Keller and Ailawadi 2004) proved to influence participants’ evaluation of the retailer and its products: “If I think of Ackermans [retailer], just by looking into the store, it seems so bright and it is too busy. It has very bright colors. It is too much and it is cluttered. It is as if a certain type of person who has such bright colors in their home shop there. I don’t know who it is…lower income, bargain hunters…personally I would not buy linen there”. Of particular significance in the analyses of these statements is the social identity appeal connected to the retailer’s store atmosphere. Clearly, visual stimuli and physical display in an interior retail outlet is important in convincing consumers of the offering’s ability to reinforce social identity and membership in specific taste cultures. Ailawadi and Keller’s (2004) commendations with regard to the crafting of appealing in-store atmospheres and unique store images seem relevant in the local context, especially in terms of socially communicative products.

However, caution should be exercised in such an endeavor as participants also recognized that efforts made by retailers to enhance in-store atmosphere can inflate their pricing format: “We can all see that Woolworths [retailer] definitely spend more money in presenting their stores as quality stores…they have to pay for all of that as well, so they have to increase their prices”. Again, these findings substantiate Keller and Ailawadi’s (2004) view that even though store atmosphere improve consumers’ perceptions of the quality of merchandise in a store, they also tend to associate it with higher prices.

For the most part, participants’ perceptions about price and quality were linked to a particular retail store brand as illustrated in the following statement: “I would say Woolworths [retailer] is more expensive, because they have the image of quality”; “Obviously it’s connected to price. I mean you are not going to get the same quality towel at Mr Price [retailer] than what you are going to get at Woolworths or Edgars [retailers]”. As noted by Miyazaki et al. (2005) one of the most commonly studied relationships in developed markets is that of price and perceived quality with recent efforts focused on the effect of additional extrinsic cues, including brand and store name, on this price-quality relationship. Of particular relevance in this study is their conclusion that when intrinsic information is limited or deemed ineffectual, extrinsic cues are more likely to be used to assess product quality, thus resulting in more heuristic decision making as illustrated in the following statement: “Brands exist because they are known for quality. Everybody shopping at Woolworths [retailer] mentions quality. They know they are going to get quality. It doesn’t matter how much they pay. They buy because of the brand.”

Apart from store atmosphere and the brand-price-quality perceptions, participants placed particular emphasis on the depth of retailers’ assortments, perhaps more so since the aims of this study were focused on one product category in particular as opposed to a broader assortment of products. Prior research in developed markets has found ample support for the common sense expectation that larger assortments allow consumers more flexibility in their choices and afford variety seeking consumers greater utility with the increased possibility of finding the items they desire (Ailawadi and Keller 2004, Chernev 2006). This is noted in the following statement: “…these stores carry full ranges of all styles. You might not find what you are looking for in smaller outlets”. The findings of this study also underpin the uniqueness of a retailer’s product offering as an important differentiating criterion: “Loads of Living [retailer] has something to offer which the other retailers don’t have. I like buying gifts there. I think they are highly over priced, but if I buy there I know that there is a good chance that the person won’t have it. I can’t say the same for Mr Price [retailer]”.

Although the breadth of assortments did not feature as significantly as the depth of retailers’ offerings, a few statements such as “You buy linen where it is convenient and accessible and where you buy other things” acknowledge the perceived benefits of a wide assortment. In conjunction with accessibility and convenient location of an outlet, broad product assortments enable one-stop shopping convenience that is becoming increasingly important for time constrained consumers in developed marketplaces (Ailawadi and Keller 2004, Pan and Zinkman 2006). The relevance of convenience within the South African developing context also seem evident in participants’ recognition of retailers’ service offerings such as in-store credit and account facilities (“I will go to Edgars [retailer], because I have an account there and it is convenient to buy on credit”) as well as liberal return policies that reduce perceived risk (“At least if you go to Woolworths [retailer] or Edgars [retailer], you know that if something goes wrong it will be refunded”). In this regard Risch (1987) explains that whatever contributes to consumers’ personal comfort, preventing frustration and friction as well as financial, physical and mental expenditures, may be construed as convenient.

Similar to empirical research in more developed marketplaces, these findings provide impetus for the contention that store brands have an advantage over manufacturer brands in that they are more multi-faceted in nature (Ailawadi and Keller 2004) and can rely on rich consumer experiences and associations (such as those provided by store atmosphere, price-quality relationships, product assortments, and other value added services) to create strong brand images. In relation to the multitude of retail store brands referred to by participants during the entire course of discussions, only two manufacturer brands were mentioned. Though participants’ attitudes towards both brands were positive, the hegemony of retail store brands manifest in the following statements: “Colibri [manufacturer] is a good name, but even if it is Colibri, you are not going...
to get the same quality Colibri at Mr Price [retailer] as you would get at Edgars [retailer] or Woolworths [retailer]. Perhaps Mr Price buys Colibri’s rejects”; “Edgars and Stuttafords [retailers] sell Colibri [manufacturer], but also Mr Price [retailer]. So you don’t know if the quality is that good anymore”. The apparent ascendancy of retailer images and brand associations in this context may be attributed to local retailers’ enhanced ability to position their products on the basis of more intangible extrinsic cues that transcend mere product performance. Clearly, the factors that contribute to these circumstances may prove fruitful ground for further empirical investigation, especially for those retailing and manufacturing firms interested in expanding and establishing operations in developing marketplaces such as South Africa.

User imagery and psychological benefits derived from retailer image and store brands
Escalas and Bettman (2003), in referring to the work of Keller and Aaker, emphasize user imagery (i.e., suppositions regarding the brand user, including demographic and psychographic associations) and the related psychological benefits (e.g., social approval and personal expression) that are derived from brand images. The following statement may serve as an example in this regard:

“People who buy at Loads of Living [retailer] are focused on trends. For them it is important to buy things with the right image…they are trendy people, people who can afford to have a house with furnishings and decorations to show off. Only people with money can follow that lifestyle, because it costs money to be trendy. I know someone who shops at Loads of Living. He is a bachelor, 34 years of age, has a high income and buys all his things at Loads of Living. He does not waste money on little pieces of junk sold at Pep [retailer]. He spends large amounts at a time, “, R5000 or so. That is who he is.”

Participants agreed that consumers can be typified by the retail outlet they patron. User imagery was evident in that patrons of various outlets could be described in terms of demographic and socio-economic variables as well as spending patterns, trend consciousness and a host of other personality traits. A relationship between the self-image, store brand and retailer image is therefore plausible, which may in turn lead to certain psychological benefits such as social approval and personal expression. Belk’s (1988) clarification of the symbolic significance of the home and its decorations is however important in this regard. He explains that the expressive imagery of the house and its furnishing is only fully acquired during consumption, thus implying that at the point of acquisition only a portion of the ultimate meaning is acquired. The point made is that to enjoy the psychological benefits (such as social approval and personal expression) derived from a particular brand of interior product, it has to be incorporated and used in an interior environment to acquire its full symbolic and expressive meaning.

Social context and the influence of reference groups on retailer image and store brand associations
According to the symbolic interactionist perspective, objects such as interior furnishings and decorations (including textile products) may exist in physical form, but they may also become social objects when given meaning through social interaction with others such as reference groups (Charon 2001). Escalas and Bettmann (2005) investigated the role of reference groups as a source of brand meaning. They conclude that if reference groups use and become associated with particular brands, such meaning may be appropriated by consumers to construct their self-concepts “If people see Woolworths [retail store brand], they know it is good. If they see Mr Price [retail store brand], they know it is cheap stuff”; “I would also go to Woolworths because they have a name”. However, in accordance with findings derived from more developed markets (Batra and Homer 2004; Escalas and Bettman 2005) this effect is moderated by the degree to which the brand is symbolic, that is communicate something about the user (“I think it says a lot about you, if you only buy a certain brand of towels… It’s a bit of yourself in your bathroom. I mean your choice of colors, design, pattern…it reflects whether you have good taste or bad taste”) and is especially true for products that are socially visible (“Forget about the sheets, nobody sees it anyway, but a towel is different, there you buy the best”) and consumed publicly (“I put out my best towels for my guests, friends and other people. I think if it is good towels especially put out for you, it is going to make an impression”).

CONCLUSION
As with any qualitative research involving a restricted number of participants, the limitations of this study is clear in that the findings are not generalizable. Notwithstanding its limitations, the study does provide preliminary insights into the role of retailer images and store brands as extrinsic cues in young urban consumers’ selection of interior textile products in a developing urban context, which may prove useful as a basis from which to embark on future quantitative research projects involving larger samples.

In addressing the question whether young urban consumers are influenced by extrinsic cues surrounding the retailer image and store brand, the findings of the study suggest a strong association between various store brands and the interior textile product category. Similar to findings derived from more developed markets, store brand preferences are based on three dimensions associated with the retailer’s image. These include the store’s atmosphere, product assortments as well as price and quality perceptions. In addition, the perceived convenience of certain value added service offerings such as in-store credit also serve as discriminating factors.

Physical elements of a retailer’s in-store atmosphere prove particularly important in evaluating the retail offering’s ability to reinforce social identity and membership in specific taste cultures. As in the case of developed markets, the value of attractive in-store atmospheres and unique store images should therefore not be underestimated, although it may inflate price perceptions. Overall, perceptions about price and quality are mostly associated with a particular retail brand. Apart from store atmosphere and brand-price-quality perceptions, the exclusivity and depth of retailers’ assortments is also emphasized as it allows for more flexibility in product choices and affords variety seeking individuals the increased possibility of finding items they desire. Although some intrinsic performance features and design attributes are recognized, these aspects do not necessarily form the basis of differentiation among competing offerings. These findings have significant implications for manufacturers focused on the developing urban context of South Africa, and provide impetus for the contention that store brands have an advantage over manufacturer brands in establishing strong images and associations based on the fact that they are more multi-faceted in nature and can rely on more extrinsic attributes.

The study also provides clarity on the symbolic expressive roles of retailer images and store brands in a developing market context. It seems evident that consumers do not simply patronize a retail store, but patronize the image of that store. User imagery is apparent and a relationship between the self-image, store brand and retailer image is likely to occur, offering certain psychological benefits such as social approval and personal expression. More-
over, reference groups represent a source for brand associations depending on the degree to which the brand is symbolic, (i.e. communicate something about the user) and is especially relevant for products that are socially visible and consumed publicly.

It should be emphasized that this study merely served an exploratory and descriptive purpose. Although it succeeds in establishing the relevance of various concepts from a wide array of existing retailing and consumer behavior research, it only did so within the frame of a very limited sample. As such, it does not highlight differences that may exist among consumers of various cultural, demographic and socio-economic backgrounds. It is recommended that future research should focus on a larger sample, encompassing a wider geographical scope that could provide more representative data. Attention could be focused on other interior product categories and/or usage occasions as these may impact on the salience of functional/utilitarian as well as symbolic/expressive qualities. Such research should be of interest and value to retailers, manufacturers and various other distributors of interior-related products that operate within developing consumer markets such as South Africa.

REFERENCES


A Consumer Income Predicting Model Based on Survey Data: An Analysis Using Geographically Weighted Regression (GWR)

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ABSTRACT

Based on data of 662 households from 75 districts in the city of São Paulo, this paper investigates the relations between electricity consumption and household income, with use of geographic weighted regressions (GWR). Findings reveal that electricity consumption is useful for characterizing household income, a frequently used proxy for purchasing power. The employed GWR were more effective to the studied task than traditional linear regressions. Also, alternatives for allocation of points were analyzed, because their exact locations were not available. The results may be useful for marketing professionals, policy makers, and credit agents who are committed to characterizing consumers socio-economically.

INTRODUCTION

A substantial portion of marketing research is still empirical and exploratory, a scenario which is similar to the one described by Sheth (1971) a few decades ago. Since then, marketing researchers have employed countless qualitative and quantitative techniques to analyze data, perhaps helped by the rapid development of fast computer processing and statistical packages.

Nowadays, it is very common to collect “spatially enabled” survey data. The motivation has come from several disciplines, including the universe of marketing and social sciences, and the subsequent improvements that spatial statistics allow in the interpretation, measurement of relationships, and prediction. As pointed out by Bradlow et al. (2005), by generalizing the notion of a map to include demographic and psychometric representations, spatial models can capture a variety of effects (spatial lags, spatial autocorrelation, and spatial drift) that affect firm or consumer decision behavior.

However, it is also common that the data related to these subjects is not quite suitable for spatial analysis. Many forms of data collection do not make available adequate information about location (in accuracy or precision)-these situations produce data for which the precise location of each observation is not known—making available just information about the region where the observation is located (like district, region, postal code, or municipality).

This situation could be viewed as the opposite of the known “Modifiable Areal Unit Problem” (Jelinski and Wu 1996), which describes the effect on the observed spatial relationships of data due to scaling and zonation. For the situation described in this paper, rather than having a set of point data that can be aggregated in a variety of ways, we are given a fixed zonation with associated data and intend to place these data within the zone in an effective way.

A helpful tool to address such issues is geographically weighted regression (GWR), which takes advantage of data from locations near the focal location, being more informative about the relationship between the independent and dependent variables in the focal location. When calculating the estimates for a focal location, GWR gives more weight to data from locations that are closer to it than to those that are distant (Mittal, Kamakura, and Govind, 2004).

Good examples of GWR applications in marketing are the studies of Lu et al. (2006) that modeled the relationship between area brand performance and related marketing phenomena taking the sales of an European car brand; and of Mittal et al. (2004), that used GWR to develop an approach that enables a firm to identify regional patterns in data about satisfaction, providing guidance in the implementation of a service strategy on a national basis.

This paper investigates approaches to point allocation inside polygons using an empirical study by applying GWR models on a specific survey of the Brazilian power distribution sector. The regression models constructed aim to predict household income with only one independent variable: the monthly billed residential electricity consumption (or simply energy or electricity consumption). Previous studies have related the consumption of electricity to income concentration in Brazil. Araújo (1979) characterized the domestic consumption of electricity by means of household income variability. Pompermayer and Charnet (1996) found statistically significant influences of social-economic and demographic factors on the consumption of electricity in the State of São Paulo.

Results reveal that the GWR models implemented in this context lead to superior fit to data when compared to traditional linear models (LM). They also reinforce the argument that this spatial-econometrics technique can effectively be applied to improve marketing research.

The next section describes the relevance of the study. In the sequence, the main concepts applied in the model, the GWR technique, and point allocation alternative methods are shown in the methodology chapter. Results are then described and, finally, concluding remarks are presented with suggestions for future work.

ENERGY CONSUMPTION AND CONSUMER INCOME

Income can be understood as the summation of all earnings provided by work and other sources (IBGE 2003) and may be calculated for individuals, families or households. It includes the sum of gross income (before taxation) from work, pensions, government, and public social security programs (such as minimum income, school grants, or unemployment benefits). It is usually the adopted subject descriptor in studies of poverty and living conditions, since it provides access to basic goods and services.

However, accurate indicators of income are difficult to collect, as its declaration is frequently altered in interviews, and it is subject to seasonal changes, thus becoming an imprecise indicator in market researches.

Many research professionals prefer to capture indicators of socioeconomic classification and purchasing power based on possessions and educational levels as proxies for income and welfare. A recent example of such an indicator is the Brazilian Economic Classification Criterion (CCEB), or simply the Brazilian Criterion, created in 1996 by the National Research Enterprises Association (ANEP). Based on possessions, the indicator results in a scale varying from zero to 34, and segments seven economic classes (ABEP 2004). The Brazilian Criterion, however, faces important
regional differences (ABEP 2004) and is not suitable for characterizing families which lie on the extremes of income distribution (Mattar 1996).

There is also criticism regarding the use of other socioeconomic classification criteria, mainly because of operational difficulties. For example, the information provided by the periodical census carried out in Brazil frequently needs to be updated. On the other hand, socioeconomic constructs may demand adjustments to be efficiently measured in specific regions and segments.

In order to efficiently characterize populations of interest, the studies about socioeconomic welfare may be improved by the employment of variables that can better indicate purchasing power. Among those variables is the consumption of electric energy, including 97.0% of the Brazilian households; 99.6% in urban areas (IBGE 2003) and 99.4% in the Southeast region (IBGE 2003). Electricity covers more households in Brazil than telecommunications, water, and gas services (IBGE 2003). Databases of electricity distribution enterprises contain consumption information about all of their customers.

Pompermayer and Charnet (1996) characterized the domestic consumption of electricity by means of household income variability and found statistically significant influences of social and demographic factors on the consumption of electricity in the State of Sao Paulo.

The growing use of technology in households in the Brazilian Southeast region by means of computers, and surely the internet—corresponding to an increase of 11% in 2004, and the increasing acquisition of goods such as televisions and refrigerators, foster the residential use of electric energy and its influence over the welfare of families (IBGE, 2005).

When aggregated to geographical, historical and seasonal data, electricity consumption indicators may contribute to the segmentation of consumers from regions where it is hard to collect data about income, thus providing knowledge for the development of services and goods. Also, electricity distribution companies often use income predictions in order to develop their market regionally and estimate revenues. Finding a relation between electricity consumption and income may, therefore, fit the interests of marketing and research professionals.

**METHODOLOGY**

The dataset utilized in these analyses was the ABRADEE (Association of Brazilian Power Distribution Companies) Survey of Customer Satisfaction. The survey is applied annually for residential customers of almost all Brazilian power distribution companies. Interviews are made for selected households, with the target person being the head of family. Many questions related to satisfaction are applied and some demographic aspects are obtained: household income, head of family’s age and educational level, monthly-billed electricity consumption of the household, and others.

The most detailed location information of the household collected in the interview is the district where the household is located. Addresses, postal codes or census sectors were not considered. The ABRADEE’s Survey for AES Eletropaulo, one of the most important Brazilian power distribution companies, was employed in this study. In particular, the survey applied data from the city of São Paulo, in the Brazilian Southeast region, for the year of 2004.

Geographically Weighted Regression is a technique for spatial data analysis. This term was introduced by Fotheringham, Charlton and Brunsdon (1997, 2002) to describe a family of regression models in which the coefficients, $\beta$, are allowed to vary spatially.

In a traditional linear regression, we assume that the relationship modeled holds everywhere in the study area, that is, the regression parameters are considered “whole-map” statistics. In many situations, this is not correct, as mapping residuals may reveal.

Many different solutions have been proposed for dealing with spatial variation in studied relationships. GWR permits parameter estimates to vary locally. Regression coefficients are determined by examining the set of points within a well-defined neighborhood of each point, using a weighting scheme (normally, bi-square or Gaussian).

A bandwidth that defines the neighborhood is the key factor; it may be defined manually or alternatively by some form of adaptive method such as the minimization of the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) (Fotheringham, Charlton and Brunsdon 2002; De Smith, Goodchild and Longley 2007).

As the district of each interview is the only locational data recorded in this study, and GWR considers points as the basic spatial unit of observation, the simplest way to proceed is to associate the district’s centroid to each interview. Under that criterion, many interviews are associated with the same “location”.

Looking at this peculiarity, the unit of observation becomes an issue. The units are households, but we do not have any means of geo-coding their location except to the centroid of the district to which they are associated. This means that any households in the same polygon would effectively be stacked one on top of the other at the centroid. This would result in a weight of one for the local sample regressions for each of these stacked points, while any households in adjacent polygons would receive a smaller weight, but again, weights would all be equal.

Centroid GWR should not produce realistic results due to similar weights being given to data that may well be spatially dispersed and, therefore, have intrinsically different neighborhood influences. Since this would be the most naive approach point allocation, it can be viewed as the null model; it is expected that any model that can produce a more realistic spatial allocation of points within each polygon improves the overall spatial regression performance.

Two alternatives of point distribution are applied in this study: Alternative 1-Generation based on Density of Households; and Alternative 2-Generation based on Probability of Fitness for Energy Consumption. The alternative implementations were produced with the statistical environment R 2.6.1 (R Development Core Team 2007), using spatial packages (extensions) MAPTOOLS 0.7-4, SPLANCS 2.01-23 and SPATSTAT 1.12-5. The GWR models were implemented using SPGWR 0.4-7 extension. Both alternatives are described next.

For Alternative 1-Generation based on Density of Households, information about the density of households in the city of São Paulo was used as a surrogate for likelihood of survey location. This information was obtained from AES Eletropaulo, which is the unique power distribution company covering the studied area. Hence, every electrified household is a customer of this company. Using a grid of 100 squared meters, we computed the number of residential customers (e.g. households) per cell per district. Based on this grid, we generated a random point pattern containing $n$ independent and identically distributed random points, with the density of households’ grid as the specified distribution (common probability density), considering that you have $n$ interviews in the district.

Alternative 2-Generation based on Probability of Fitness for Energy Consumption is based on the distribution of energy consumption in the city of São Paulo, according to the customers of AES Eletropaulo. Alternative 2 generates a grid of fitness for
electricity consumption, from the computation of the average of electricity consumption per cell in the grid. Similarly to Alternative 1, we generate a random point pattern of \( n \) independent points distributed according to this surface.

Figure 1 shows examples of the implementation of both alternatives. Notice that some points sampled in the example of Alternative 2 are located in cells with low density of population. This is because there is a small (but non-zero) probability for these points to be chosen. Of course, the alternatives could be improved by increasing the accuracy of the underlying distribution data. Moreover, this example shows that the densities of households and energy consumption seem to follow opposite patterns; it illustrates different approaches considering two important geographical distributions to support point allocation. A combination of information on both densities could be used to estimate a third model, where locations would be obtained by sampling from a bivariate distribution. The use of sample planning information (e.g. how census sectors and households are sampled and eventually substituted in the field survey) could support alternative distributions.

We tested the alternative approaches by generating 1,000 iterations of GWR income-predicting model based on energy consumption for each alternative, considering the AIC minimisation local sample size suggested for each GWR model.

We compared the resulting performance for each alternative with the original GWR model (the null model that used the districts’ centroid for point placement) and with the traditional spatial Linear Model (LM). We named these original models as “GWR centr” and “LM centr”, respectively.

In addition, we computed the average of income and of energy consumption per district, and used this data set (with just one observation per district) as a simplified aggregation model with each data point associated with the district centroid. The linear regression and GWR models were also applied to these aggregated datasets. These models are referred to as “LM aggr” and “GWR aggr”, respectively. Results and analyses are described in the next section.

RESULTS

The ABRADEE survey applied in the city of Sao Paulo in 2004 had 662 valid respondents. Income and Energy Consumption were collected as continuous variables—in R$ (“reais”, Brazilian currency) and in kilowatt-hour (kWh), respectively. Seventy-five (75) districts were sampled for this survey. Figure 2 shows the map of 96 districts of Sao Paulo (in gray), highlighting (in dark gray) the 75 districts sampled for the ABRADEE survey.

The following graphs (Figure 3) show the scatter-plot of electricity consumption and the household income for centroid
A Consumer Income Predicting Model Based on Survey Data

placement and the predicted values of income for “LM centri” and “GWR centri”, respectively. In addition, the same information is showed for “LM aggr” and “GWR aggr”. The aggregate version has 75 observations (one per district).

A significant improvement in the coefficient of determination values were obtained using GWR models (centroid placement varied from 0.19788 to .45426, and the aggregation version varied from .38533 to .54904).

The GWR implementation used an Adaptive Kernel-which employs a fixed number of observations in each neighbourhood instead of a fixed radius of bandwidth- and Gaussian weights Scheme. Figure 4 and Table 1 show the dispersion of the coefficient of determination for each alternative, by means of box-plots of 1,000 computed iterations, in comparison with the original GWR.

There is little difference between any of the alternative approaches, with the $R^2$ coefficient around 0.40. The dispersions—calculated by means of standard deviations—of the coefficients of determinations were also quite similar for all alternatives.

The variation of bandwidth between alternatives showed the same behaviour as the coefficient of determination; both were very highly correlated, what suggests a very important role for AIC minimization. Figure 5 shows the scatter plot and correlation of this relationship.

The important role of AIC minimization—in this context for local models—is shown by the variation in results when points are allocated with each model. The alternatives have been implemented so that bandwidth changes with each different point allocation in the space, and this potentially affects the smoothness of the global model. Surprisingly, the resulting alternatives had lower coefficients of determination than the simple centroid model, even though it was assumed that the point-allocation was adding additional information to the data and therefore should have resulted in improvements in model prediction.

This counter-intuitive result must be further explored to understand in what ways the model behaviour and contribution to variance explanation are interacting in a similar manner to previous research into cross-validation properties in GWR (Farber and Paez 2007).

**FINAL REMARKS**

This paper developed an income-predicting GWR model using electricity consumption as an independent variable, which was shown to be a useful indicator for predicting household income under geographic effects. The consumption of electricity can potentially enrich the economic characterization of households, which is traditionally measured by means of other indicators of consumption and purchasing power—many of which are not easily collected nor periodically stored, such as the possession of goods, for example.

In such a context, the current automated process of registering the amount of kilowatts consumed in a household employed by energy distributors represents a business opportunity for these firms to provide an indicator of consumer welfare to the market. Therefore, this study may inspire the creation of regional indicators of electricity supply, which can be useful for research institutes and organizations dealing with public and urban affairs, customer segmentation, credit policies, and regional models which capture consumers and households in a broad way.

Mainly, this work offers a methodological contribution to the issue of economic characterization of households by discussing and empirically testing the use of GWR in substitution to traditional linear regression models in the prediction of income. The GWR models applied to the ABRADEE survey led to a significant improvement to the explanation of variability for the income-predicting model based on energy consumption. The results of the coefficients of determination changed from 0.19788 to 0.45426 when the centroids were used as the point allocation of every interview conducted in the districts.

We have analyzed alternatives for point allocation based on realistic assumptions about the distribution of observations in the studied sample, in detraction of district centroid placement. The implementation of the alternatives suggests the minimization of AIC (Akaike Information Criterion). However, coefficients of
determination measured for two alternatives of reallocation of points (households interviewed) inside districts’ polygons were revealed to be of around 0.40. It suggests that the use of additional information of the polygon—in this case, the density of population and of energy consumption—has similar impact in the point-location allocation. It also suggests that, in the studied context, the most realistic coefficient of determination for income predicted by means of electricity consumption is around 0.40.

This work has presented an experimental study in the allocation of point patterns with secondary data. The results using spatial point pattern statistics and mixed models have been shown to improve predictions about the socioeconomic characteristics of a population, therefore representing a prolific field for future empirical studies in marketing and, more specifically, customer segmentation.

REFERENCES
FIGURE 4
COEFFICIENT OF DETERMINATION AND DISPERSION FOR GWR PER ALTERNATIVE FOR EACH REGRESSION

Note: Local Sample Size for GWR (Adaptive Kernel) was determined by AIC minimization for each iteration.

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF ALTERNATIVE POINT ALLOCATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model Results</th>
<th>Descriptive Statistics</th>
<th>Alternative 1</th>
<th>Alternative 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R2 (coefficient of determination)</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>0.40373</td>
<td>0.40483</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>0.39813</td>
<td>0.39936</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Dev.</td>
<td>0.03268</td>
<td>0.03341</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bandwidth (in percentage of total observations)</td>
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<td>0.10792</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Median</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Dev.</td>
<td>0.02726</td>
<td>0.02845</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

FIGURE 5
SCATTER-PILOT AND CORRELATION OF BANDWIDTH AND COEFFICIENT OF DETERMINATION FOR EACH POINT DISTRIBUTION ALLOCATION


Negotiating Beauty: Local Readings of Global Cultural Flows
Joonas Rokka, Helsinki School of Economics, Finland
Hanna-Kaisa Desavelle, Tampere University of Technology, Finland
Ilona Mikkonen, Helsinki School of Economics, Finland

ABSTRACT

Drawing from cultural consumer studies, this paper focuses on the tension between global mass-mediated consumer culture(s) and localized meaning making. The common discourse of globalization as global unicity is problematized with a study indicating that local historical and socio-cultural context is used as a resource in consumer sense making of global cultural flows. More specifically, the empirical research looks into how local readings of beauty are formed in a Nordic (Finnish) context. Despite acculturation into global consumer culture, local symbolic and mythical resources, such as the Finnish ideal of naturalness, are utilized by consumers in making sense of international advertising images.

INTRODUCTION

“Technology has now created the possibility and even the likelihood of a global culture. The Internet, fax machines, satellites, and cable TV are sweeping away cultural boundaries. Global entertainment companies shape the perceptions and dreams of ordinary citizens, wherever they live. This spread of values, norms, and culture tends to promote Western ideals of capitalism. Will local cultures inevitably fall victim to this global “consumer” culture? (Globalization of Culture, Global Policy Forum http://www.globalpolicy.org/globaliz/cultural/index.htm)

Drawing from cultural consumer studies (Arnould and Thompson 2005; Moisander and Valtonen 2006), this paper focuses on the tension between global mass-mediated consumer culture(s) and localized meaning making. We look at how consumers draw from their local, socio-historical contexts to constitute and negotiate meanings for marketplace offerings and practices, using advertising as elicitation material.

In marketing discourse there has been a tendency to think about globalization as described in the cultural homogenization discourse (e.g. Hannerz 1990; 1992; Appadurai 1990; Jameson 1998; Sklair 1998; Tomlinson 1999). In other words, globalization has become synonymous with forming uniform consumption habits, homogenizing tastes and ultimately erasing local cultures to the point where we can start talking about a global consumer culture (Tomlinson 1999). From this viewpoint, the mass-media, or the ‘mediascape’, is seen as a key vehicle in spreading global cultural flows (Appadurai 1990). The mass-mediated messages, advertising included, are played out as promoting relatively unified, typically Westernized or Americanized, tastes and norms. The cultural homogenization argument may seem overwhelming but there is, at least on the superficial level of visual signs, plenty of evidence to confirm such notions: people all over the world are consuming the same foods, watching the same TV-shows and movies, to fit the local social-historical structures and particularities. These global but localized, i.e. glocalized (Robertson 1992), structures can serve as a certain kind of blueprint of how to live and act in consumer society. They also highlight the dark side of the powerful multinational conglomerates, who may work to erase local cultural particularities by bringing the global ways to localities (e.g. Thompson and Arsel 2004).

However, in academic research, the view of globalization and cultural production has been questioned and problematized. Instead of taking global cultural production in the form of the classic ‘cultural transfer model’ (McCrum 1986) where meaning is understood as moving in one direction from producers to consumers, it is rather seen as being produced in dialectics between consumers and marketers, where both consumers and marketers imbue and attribute meanings and values to marketplace offerings and practices (e.g. Peñaloza and Gilly 1999; Peñaloza 2000; Arnould and Thompson 2005; Firat and Dholakia 2006; Moisander and Valtonen 2006). In this sense, the global consumer culture cannot be seen as something that is imposed on consumers, as a standardizing force or the culture-ideology of consumption discussed by Sklair (1998), but something that is constantly negotiated and appropriated in the ongoing marketplace activities and interactions (Peñaloza and Gilly 1999). Thus, the interpretive framework that guides our analysis takes that consumers’ consumption practices and meaning making stem from their local sociocultural, historically constituted contexts (Holt 1997; Thompson 1994; Thompson and Troester 2002), and these resources form the basis for negotiating and appropriating global meanings.

Many accounts have theorized the new global cultural economy as a consequence of intensification of human interaction, interconnectedness, and global consciousness suggesting that the world can be conceived as a ‘single social space’ (McGrew 1997, 65). However, we need to bear in mind that the global cultural economy is to be comprehended first and foremost as a “complex, overlapping, and disjunctive order” that cannot be understood only under such simplified conditions (Appadurai 1990). It is therefore necessary—as it is our attempt in this paper—to better understand the circulation of transnational and global cultural flows, such as global advertising, streaming large and complex repertoires of images and narratives to peoples throughout the world. These cultural symbolic resources play an important part in providing people with materials that they can use in making sense of their everyday lives and identities.

Hence, we regard globalization as a concept that has a tending towards ‘global unicity’ (e.g. Robertson 1992; Tomlinson 1999, 10-12). According to Robertson (1992, 26), this unicity is understood as a context which increasingly determines social relations and simultaneously a frame of reference within which social agents increasingly figure their existence, identities and actions. Thus, global unicity does not necessarily imply a simplistic uniformity, or world culture, but it is a complex social and phenomenological condition in which different orders of human life are brought into articulation with one another. In previous research, global unicity has been viewed as ‘global structures of common difference’ (Wilk 1995, 177) referring to tendencies to appropriate and translate global cultural structures, such as the youth culture (Kjeldgaard and Askegaard 2006), coffee culture (Kjeldgaard and Östberg 2007), or even beauty contests (Wilk 1995), to fit the local social-historical structures and particularities. These global but localized, i.e. glocalized (Robertson 1992), structures can serve as a certain kind of blueprint of how to live and act in consumer society. They also highlight the dark side of the powerful multinational conglomerates, who may work to erase local cultural particularities by bringing the global ways to localities (e.g. Thompson and Arsel 2004).

In this article our interest is on how this tendency to appropriate and negotiate global cultural unities in a local context is represented in consumers’ talk. More specifically, the main question guiding our research is: How is a specific historical and sociocultural context used as a resource in consumer sense making of global cultural flows?

The purpose of the empirical research is to explore how consumers discursively constitute and negotiate the notions and meanings of beauty, and make sense of their selves, using global
advertising images as resources, and appropriating them to their cultural and socio-historical contexts and identity projects. The questions guiding our empirical investigation are: How do Finnish women draw from their local, socio-historical contexts to constitute and negotiate meanings of beauty from global advertising images? What are the culture-specific resources used in this sense making and meaning construction?

We attempt to approach this question through an empirical exploration of the discursive construction of beauty among Finnish consumers. Beauty is a fruitful concept for this type of analysis, as the ideologies and meanings related to Western (American) ideals of beauty have been observed to dominate the bulk of worldwide advertising (Griffin et al. 1994 cited in Frith, Shaw, and Cheng. 2005; Duke 2002); similarly to masculine ideologies (Holt and Thompson 2004) the beauty ideals circulate prominently in global mass culture. These conceptions and figures are championed in films, television, books, sports, music, and news, and act all as semiotic raw ingredients that consumers draw upon to construct their identities.

It has been suggested in advertising research literature that the ideals of (physical) beauty and attractiveness have diversified from dominant singular ideals and taking into account different ethnic groupings. According to Forbes et al. (2007) the Western standards have gone through an evolution in the past century from “the flat-chested flappers of the 1920’s” to the “curvaceously thin beauty icons of the 1990’s”. Martin and Peters (2005) conclude that the contemporary Western standard is based largely on three attributes, namely thinness, fitness, and attractiveness, whereas Sypek et al. (2006) see thinness and female body shape as main aspects associated with female beauty. However, the diversification of representations has been accused of being still very North-American centered; the notions of “short-haired brunettes and boyish blondes” that “have challenged the Christie Brinkley genre of tousled girl next door” and the “overtly ethnic girls” that are “stirring up the modeling melting pot” (Englis, Solomon, and Ashmore 1994), fail to acknowledge that the melting pot is still very North-American. Furthermore, beauty and the ideals associated with beauty have often been seen as oppressive and tyrannical (Wolf 1990); for women physical beauty has customarily been the characteristic they are judged upon and evaluated against (Black and Sharma 2001), regardless whether they wish to follow the idealized standards or not. In the midst of this criticism it seems that, much like the notion of homogenizing globalization, the existence of the universal ideals is held self-evident to the point that they are not questioned.

Previous research has explored the ways in which consumers make sense and appropriate commercial messages and conventional ways of talking about marketplace phenomena to construct personalized consumption meanings (Thompson and Haytko 1997; Hirschman and Thompson 1997; Thompson and Hirschman 1995). These studies have illustrated the role of the so called Western perspective, or Western fashion pattern (McClellan 1988, cited in Thompson and Haytko 1997), as consumers’ frame of reference through which advertising is interpreted, and shed light on culturally idealized perceptions of beauty (e.g. attractiveness, fashion, and body image). Although many consumer and advertising researchers have pointed out the importance of embedding the study of consumers within their cultural contexts (e.g. Fischer and Arnold 1990; Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1990; Hirschman 1993) previous fashion and beauty research has centered on North American consumers (Thompson and Haytko 1997; Hirschman and Thompson 1997; Kates & Shaw-Garlock 1999; Murray 2002; Schouten 1991). While Thompson and Haytko (1997), for example, emphasize the possibility of a multitude of counterbalancing interpretive positions and consumer creativity in appropriating the dominating discourses to fit their personal circumstances, the context of their research seems in some sense limited; little is said about the negotiation and construction of alternative beauty discourses in the ethnically and socially fragmented American environment, let alone in non-American cultural settings.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

To illustrate how consumers draw from global cultural flows to construct their perceptions and meanings of beauty, we looked into the discourses emerging among Finnish female consumers. To this end we applied group discussion methods (Valtonen 2005, 223-241) to analyze Finnish female consumers. To emphasize the role of visual rhetoric in consumer interpretations, we also employed projective techniques to generate richer insights (Zaltman and Coulter 1995; Moisander and Valtonen 2005), using print advertising as elicitation material.

We conducted five group discussion sessions with total of 24 participants, from 20 to 66 years of age, and from different occupational and educational backgrounds. The sessions were approximately two hours in length. The discussion took place in four different geographical regions in Finland, including both Southern and Northern Finland, and the capital region (see Appendix 1 for more details on the informants). There has been criticism for the overt focus on individual consumers, which, as has been argued, does not fully illustrate “the cultural and social implications of studied phenomena” (Firat and Dholakia 2006, 142). We thus also attempt to address this call to shift attention to other social contexts, and study the beauty phenomena with a more social approach in terms of our methodological choices.

Several international women’s magazines were chosen to facilitate conversation. A similar procedure has been applied in previous research (Kates and Shaw-Garlock 1999), as magazines feature stories specifically geared to female consumers, and portray plenty of advertisements of products they frequently use. Furthermore, as the informants reported not only being familiar with, but also subscribing to the magazines, they provided a familiar setting to look at and talk about the advertising images.

The informants were asked to leaf through the magazines, and select images (advertising or other) portraying female characters that they found either beautiful/attractive, or unattractive. They were further asked to elaborate their thoughts; in what way they found the images attractive/unattractive; what they thought and how they felt about the images and freely discuss their views with the other informants. In the search of spontaneous reactions, and in order to ensure variation in imagery, the informants were also shown a collection of 40 pre-selected advertisements. In our instruction we did not restrict beauty to refer only to the facial or bodily attributes, but let the informants freely construct their own perception of what beauty consists of.

We understand the interaction process between the consumer and advertising as elaborated in reader-response theory (Scott 1994) in the sense of a dialogical reading experience between “a historically situated intentional author and a culturally informed self-motivated reader”. Thus, the possibility of multiple reading strategies, uses and motives for text are celebrated. However, we would like to emphasize that our interest does not reside in the structures of ads or their possible impacts on consumers/consumer responses to advertising but on how consumers draw and give meanings from them.

The group discussions were recorded and later transcribed verbatim. The produced texts were read both independently and...
jointly, and analyzed using the basic procedures and techniques of discourse analysis as suggested by Burman and Parker (1993) and Potter and Wetherell (1987). The advertisements that informants referred to were documented and saved in digital form. The study is based on the assumption of discourse where the active role of language is emphasized in communicating and constructing meanings in human interaction. Language is seen as producing and constraining shared meanings that give means (e.g. accepted or countering ideas, vocabulary) for talking about and understanding social topics and phenomena (Burman and Parker 1993: 4).

**FINDINGS – CULTURAL RESOURCES IN CONSUMERS’ BEAUTY TALK**

In contrast with the idea of homogenous beauty ideals our informants talked about beauty in several different, partly overlapping, partly contrasting ways. Finnish consumers seem well acclimated in and informed about Americanized popular and celebrity cultures. However, it is difficult to see them as victims of American cultural imperialism or computer created, unrealistic beauty ideals. Although the female icons of contemporary global consumer culture (like Barbie, Lolita, and various Hollywood stars) are mentioned, the markedly Finnish characters are not absent either. The interpretations draw fluently from both contemporary Hollywood figures and Finnish national myths.

**Natural beauties**

One of the most prominent ways of approaching beauty in the group discussions was through the idea of ‘naturalness’, which was strongly linked to Finnishness, and to Finnish ideals of beauty.

"She isn’t wearing any makeup. Like, if your skin is so illuminated like it seems to be, it doesn’t matter whether you’re blond or not, one is pretty when there’s isn’t almost any make-up at all.” (Sini, 26)

“This is a real Miss Finland, there’s joy, softness. She looks and feels natural, somehow positive. And she’s blonde” (Olga, 43)

The informants often linked naturalness to cleanliness and pureness, which culminated in the amount of cosmetics used. “Too much” make-up was associated with messiness, which could conceal or “ruin” an otherwise beautiful woman. The concept of naturalness was strongly associated with simplicity; not only is less more, but the boundaries of high-regarded naturalness were constructed rather to be strict. The pure, fresh Miss Finland was often contrasted with the “unnaturally beautiful”, “perfect” models or celebrities like Christina Aguilera, Pamela Anderson, or Paris Hilton.

The conversations repeated the ideal qualities of straight out of the sauna freshness and Nordic luminousness, both embodied in the iconic Elovena-girl. Launched in 1925, Elovena is a Finnish oatmeal brand, in whose package a drawing of a young blond girl with blue eyes, wearing a traditional Finnish costume, standing in an oat field with a bunch of freshly cut oats, has been featured for decades. In Finland the brand is often associated with a healthy lifestyle as it started differently; the ideal form of naturalness is something that comes about spontaneously, without effort. The natural ideal, which is on the surface level manifested as a particular type of non-descript appearance, stems from certain mental characteristics that are rooted in Scandinavian-protestant worldview (i.e. modesty, equality, value of labor).

Finns have made sense of their national identity and homeland though the conceptualization of nature as the biological and ecological elements (soil, water, air, animals, and plants) in their organic state, i.e. unaffected by human presence. Nature and landscape is inscribed into several symbolic and mythical mediums of the Finnish national unity/nationalistic ideas; for example the Finnish national anthem “Maaemme” i.e. “Our land / country” praises the Finnish land and scenery whereas other national anthems within Europe (for instance France, Poland) can be seen as rather belligerent (Jussila 2007, 10). Perhaps consequently the Finnish Euro coins do not feature buildings or statesmen, but cloudberries and whooper swans (Anttila 2007; 208).

**Athletic and healthy beauties**

Our informants associated the body and the healthiness of the body to their conception of beauty. The body was also seen as an essential aspect of beauty by the informants. In contemporary consumer culture disciplining one’s body in can be associated with both appearance and health pursuits (Featherstone cited in Howson 2004, 104). “Being fit” translated to beauty, though only within limits; overt athleticism, was seen unfeminine and thus also unattractive, described as “testosterone babes” or “bodybuilders”. Being fit was not, however, equated to being thin. Many of the informants mentioned Dove’s Real Beauty campaign as an example of advertising featuring healthy looking women who seemed to be comfortable in their own bodies.

“She’s not been tortured skinny. This [Dove] campaign is all about saying that all bodies can be beautiful when you have good skin. I still remember the women in [a Dove television commercial] where they had the potbellies and bouncy castle booties” (Elsa, 31)

In the Dove campaign the execution of advertisements has been unified all over the world. It has also received a great deal of media interest for its outwardly ground-breaking “focus on promoting real, natural beauty, in an effort to offset the unrealistically thin and unhealthy archetypal images associated with modeling” (Media Awareness network). The campaign has, however, attracted also criticism for seemingly expanding the boundaries of the ideal, but at the same time reproducing the very standards it sets to challenge by promoting cellulite creams and hair-shine formulas, and using size 4 models, when the true average size in the US is 14.

In the Finnish context the appeal of Dove can be understood in terms of equality values; beauty is promoted as available to anyone. Everybody can potentially be called to pose as a model, a role which has traditionally been very restricted and conditional to possessing certain rare physical qualities. In the last few years there have been a number of Finnish marketers introducing their own versions of
real beauty campaigns. Some recent examples include Finnish clothing retailer Seppälä, and a supermarket chain’s monthly customer magazine Pirkka. Seppälä’s campaign “Be the supermodel of your own life” campaign launched in 2006 depicts young “ordinary” women and men (girls and boys) modeling on television ads as well as in their catalogue. Pirkka invites “all aged and sized people” to send their picture to model in feature stories such as for example for beauty tips, cooking recipes, swimsuit modeling or exercising tips (Pirkka, 6-7 2007).

Artificial beauties

The informants voiced strong criticism towards the manipulating or handling of the photos and referred mainly negatively to the ‘photoshopping’ of the pictures. The so called photoshopped women were considered unrealistic and artificial. The informants analyzed spontaneously in detail where the pictures had been manipulated. In addition informants displayed skepticism in their detailed reading of advertisements, and questioned the purpose of the advertisements or judged the characteristics of a specific advertising category. In general, the participants displayed a high degree of advertising persuasion knowledge, and were conscious of the maneuvers of the advertising industry. The manipulating of advertising images was almost expected, like the following comments illustrate:

“Yes, but she’s prettier with the dark hair. Somehow. But that seems really manipulated” (Sini, 26)

“This [picture] has been tampered with. It’s L’Oreal’s ad, and it’s been photoshopped... but all the ads are” (Henna, 25)

Although photoshopping as a phenomenon was often judged negatively, it did not automatically prevent the manipulated images from being considered beautiful, even if in some cases they did not conform to the informants’ beauty ideals, and were considered a turn-off. Photoshopping of images, let alone the superficial, aesthetic modification of body through cosmetic surgery, also formed a common object for irony and fun making. In informants’ talk, this idea of genuineness or authenticity was clearly represented as a separate feature from the naturalness aspect of beauty. Authenticity/artificiality thus presents us with yet another, distinctive discontinuity through which beauty is interpreted and negotiated; a digitally unenhanced image does not necessarily guarantee naturalness.

DISCUSSION

This study contributes to the cultural consumer research investigating issues of global and globalizing consumer culture and localized meaning making. A number of research projects have sought to understand the new global cultural economy from the perspective of consumer research, for example by identifying global structures of everyday consumption practices (Arnould and Thompson 2005); delving into global homogeneity of sub-cultures or consumer segments (Kjeldgaard and Askegaard, 2006); explaining global fragmentation of consumer cultures (Firat 1997); or the hegemony of global brands (Thompson and Arsel 2004). We believe, however, that further research is still needed in order to create understanding of how consumers negotiate global cultural flows, such as global advertising, by drawing on their socio-historical and culture specific resources in the sense making processes.

This study offers an alternative way to theorize the global structures of common difference. Wilk (1995) has argued that while “different cultures continue to be quite distinct and varied, they are becoming different in very uniform ways”. In other words, Wilk conceptualizes the structures of common difference to be organized and expressed along certain, global mutual dimensions; the variance of difference therefore being narrowed and constrained down to different objectified scales and measures of dimensions or standardized vocabulary for describing difference. This common structuration works as the homogenizing element of globalization.

However, our findings suggest that the dimensions across which the differentiation occur are also locally negotiated; for example the naturalness-unnaturalness dimension was appropriated differently in the Finnish context as compared to the natural look identified by Thompson and Haytko (1997) in the North-American context. Thus, while the extremes of dimension may have uniform labels (i.e. natural-unnatural), the meanings ascribed to these labels can be context specific, and draw from rich cultural-historical meanings and traditions. Thus instead of attempting to explore and identify certain global structures around which beauty ideals are constructed, we would like to bring into question the extent to which it is actually possible to assume common global structures.

On the other hand, the local readings of beauty drawn from global cultural flows demonstrates how international advertising, circulating and streaming large and complex repertoires of images and narratives to peoples throughout the world, is used in the sense making of their everyday lives and identities. Therefore, we see global cultural flows playing an important role in providing symbolic resources and materials for consumers but not necessarily in producing a global unicity of beauty ideals. For example, the Nordic consumers can be conceptualized as being well acculturated to the often Americanized media and popular culture, recognizing and being able to reflect on international advertising campaigns, identifying celebrities and evaluating their public images, and elaborating the advertisers’ motives to influence the consumers. At the same time, our findings implicate that context specific and socio-historically grounded meanings and mythological resources were informing the consumers’ ways of understanding and sense-making of advertising images. The image of the Elovenga-girl, for example, that was reflected upon in the advertising readings can be rooted all the way to the mythical female characters prominent both in literature and in arts, such as Aino in Finnish national epic Kalevala and Akseli Gallen-Kallela’s paintings.

So while marketers and advertisers may seek to hand down certain meanings to products and brands, and while their representations may become increasingly similar, the consumer experiences and understanding of them are by no means globally uniform. Therefore we wish to emphasize the importance of embedding the study of consumers’ meaning making processes to diverse socially and historically specific contexts in order to gain understanding of dynamics of particular local resources of global flows, as much of the cultural consumer research has centered on North-American context. In addition, regarding future research, we would like to study whether the Finnish emphasis on natural beauty and nature related myths symbols has a wider resonance in a larger Nordic context which can be seen as sharing similar e.g. societal, environmental, religious conditions.

REFERENCES


Pirkka-Lehto no. 6-7, 2007.


Seppälä Supermodel of your own life campaign. Available at: http://www.seppala.fi


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**APPENDIX 1**

Informant Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Place of living</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alissa</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Restaurant worker</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aune</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Planner</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsa</td>
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<td>Emilia</td>
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Shame and Consumption: Examining the Link Between Men’s Consumption Assumptions and The Feeling of Shame
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ABSTRACT
This paper provides an analytic framework focused on the social basis of emotion that was used to investigate the influence of shame over consumption. Men seem to change their consumption assumptions to avoid the experience of discomfort caused by shame. Using the data from ten in-depth interviews with Brazilian male adults the authors could establish some situations when shame influences consumer values: bad deals, consumption activities inadequacies or group misleading can make the man feel ashamed of consumption.

INTRODUCTION
Numerous studies in marketing have shown that emotions have an active role on consumption experiences (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Schouten, 1991; Fournier, 1998). This paper investigates the influence of the feeling of shame over consumption and provides an analytical framework focused on the social basis of emotion.

The feeling of shame is a very singular expression of a bunch of self-conscious emotions like embarrassment, pride and guilt. Self-conscious emotions emerge once a class of events affects the individual actively participating in the social construction of reality. This class of events can only be identified by the individuals themselves and involves elaborate cognitive processes (Demos, 2003; Lewis, 2003; Heller, 2003; Schweder, 2003). The feeling of shame is present in every culture around the globe and has been used in the process of education ( Elias, 1991).

When engaged in a consumption experience the consumer expects that some outcomes will result or certain values will be realized through products or services. These consumption assumptions provide the consumption experience with particular meaning. Shame is an interesting and insightful feeling to the study of consumption since it affects consumption assumptions and interferes on the consumption meanings, as we will discuss later in this paper.

Consumer researchers from multiple tendencies had already noticed the importance of understanding the emotional phenomena associated to consumption. Emotions are key components of the human behavior and help understand the consumer behavior as well. Emotions have an active role on consumption experiences (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Schouten, 1991; Fournier, 1998).

This paper attempts to provide a contribution for the research on emotional phenomena related to consumption. Following Bagozzi, Gürhan-Canli, and Priester (2002) proposal, we adopt an approach focused on the social basis of emotions. Although people can experience emotions privately, some emotional responses emerge from interpretations triggered by social events. Most researchers on emotional behavior use an individualistic approach (Parkinson, 1995) despite the fact that consumption events occur in a social environment. This way, we do think that the social perspective of emotions can offer contributions to the knowledge about consumer behavior.

Our aim is to better understand how shame acts through the consumption assumptions by making contact with the consumer’s subjective universe. The long interviews intended to penetrate inside the individual’s universe of social constructions and bring the relations among consumption, social groups and the feeling of shame. We collected data from face-to-face interactions among a group of ten male adults. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed and the emergent categories are presented and discussed.

By understanding how the feeling of shame interferes on the subjective meanings of consumption, we can shed some light over a somewhat obscure aspect of consumer behavior. Such clarification can be useful to marketers and researchers interested in the unpredictability of the consumer behavior.

OUTLINE OF AN ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK OF CONSUMPTION AND SHAME

Consumption, Subjectivity and the Social World
As pointed out by Baudrillard (1991), Elliott (1997) and Corrigan (2004), the social theory considers that consumption has a central role in the construction of the social world. Such role is so important that Firtat and Venkatesh (1993) consider consumption the most important social practice of the post-modern individual, determining his life conditions and meanings.

The need fulfilled by consumption is related to the social construction of meaning and cultural categories. Those meanings and categories consolidate a universe of relative meanings: the goods are necessary as a way to materialize a set of meanings. The consumption of symbolic meaning offers the individuals an opportunity to build, keep and communicate their identities. The value of a product to the consumer is determined by its capacity of use inside a social communication system (Douglas and Isherwood, 2004). Products represent tangible objects of the phenomonic world in which principles can be invested. They are tangible representations of intangible values (McCracken, 1986).

Consumers are never just by themselves. Consumption process is public and collectively elaborated: from the social world emerge the possibilities of relations and cultural sharing. During consumption, the consumers interact with a classification system of the social world that surrounds them (Douglas and Isherwood, 2004). Internally, the individual’s subjective universe is composed by a variety of feelings, fantasies, dreams, subconscious thinking and unconscious mental processes (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). The subject/consumer-object/good relationship is mediated by the consumer knowledge about the good and involves an evaluation.

On every consumption experience the consumers negotiate the knowledge about the good between their subjective universes and the social world. A product’s meaning involves a cognitive aspect — its denotation and logical linkages to other concepts. So, the consumers can place every good or service in a specific position, according to what is proposed by society. The feelings are experienced inside but the emotional labels and rules come from the social world (Nussbaum, 1997). The consumers, subjected by this system of social meanings, know what they are allowed to feel or not about almost every object or situation.

Every experience of consumption is involved in a particular set of conditions the consumers have to negotiate. As the result of
the negotiation between the social world and the subjective universe the consumers set their consumption assumptions. These assumptions suggest that certain outcomes will result or certain values will be realized through products, services and consumer behaviors (Moorman, 1987). The meaning of consumption is derived in each situation from the consumers’ consumption assumptions.

Consumption and Shame

Shame involves the individual as a whole—psique and body—and is dependent of the individual’s cognitive capacity (Heller, 2003). The elicitation of shame involves cognitive processes that include the notion of self. As a self-conscious emotion, the feeling of shame is the product of a complex set of cognitive activities that involves individual’s evaluation of their actions in regard to their standards, rules and goals (SRG) and their global evaluation of the self (Lewis, 2004, p. 629). The phenomenological experience of the person having shame is negative and painful and can result in a state of physical disturbance (confusion of thought or inability to speak, for instance).

Shame is produced by the personal interpretation of an event and is intimately connected to the emotional norms prescript by the social world. The feeling of shame can only be felt by socialized individuals and depends on the experiences socially learned and perceived (Lewis, 2003). Once it is dependent of external evaluation, the feeling of shame is dependent of the different cultural norms (Schweder, 2003).

During a consumption experience the consumers evaluate their actions in regard to their desires and to what is expected from the social environment (Scheff, 1988). They face their desires but are supposed to assume the standards, rules and goals imposed by social norms that surround him (Goffman, 1967). The analytic framework presented in Figure 1 shows the relationship between consumer desire and social norms.

As the result of the confrontation between social rules and the consumer desire we can have four outputs:

a) if the consumption activity is consistent with the consumer desire and socially approved, then the consumer expects to be proud of consumption. Organic products can satisfy one’s desire and are socially approved.

b) if the consumption activity is consistent with the consumer desire but socially disapproved, then the consumer expects to be ashamed of consumption. Pornography is a purchase that can make a man shame about afterward.

c) if the consumption activity is inconsistent with the consumer desire and socially approved, then the consumer expects to be frustrated with that experience and felt ashamed by himself. Some people start drinking with the intention of being accepted by a group but really don’t like the taste or the effects of it and know what are the consequences continuous of alcohol intake.

d) if the consumption activity is inconsistent with the consumer desire and socially disapproved, we do not suppose to have a consumption experience taking place. We named this no-consumption.

It is not difficult to understand how the feeling of shame is related to the consumers’ expectations about value. If a consumer desires a good or service but knows that the social group he or she belongs disapproves that kind of consumption he or she would expect to experience negative feelings as a result of that consumption. We can easily understand the impact of a negative emotional outcome as shame over the consumption assumptions.

It is important to make it clear that there is a difference between social rules and the law. The restriction over smoking, for instance, does not mean necessarily that the society (or a specific social group that matters to a consumer in a specific situation) disapproves smoking. It is to be clear also that the social rules are dynamic and are continuously changing. What society (or a specific social group) does not accept today could be approved in the past or can be approved in the future.

The analytic framework presented helps us to understand how the feeling of shame influences the consumption assumptions (and the meanings of consumption). In further sections we will develop a deeper analysis of the influence of the feeling of shame over the consumption assumptions.

**METHOD**

The study was designed to investigate influence of the feeling of shame over consumption assumptions. As shown in previous sections, the path chosen to access this feeling in consumption experiences involves the understanding of the social world that surrounds the consumer and its interaction with his subjective universe. It was necessary to use an “intensive” method of data collecting.

The data reported in the paper consists of ten long deep interviews (McCracken, 1988) with ten male Brazilian adults aged from 27 to 45. As one of the researchers is a man in his early 30’s, it was believed to be more comfortable for the interviewer and for the informant to discuss about shame within a same-age-and-sex context.

The interviews were framed as “casual as it can be” conversations about family life, educational background, consumption experiences and feelings associated to it. The questions were open and dependent on the interviewed characteristics. This flexible design
FINDINGS ABOUT SHAME AND CONSUMPTION

What Lets a Man Ashamed?

The consumption experience is one of the most important moments of social interaction. During this experience the individual has to be able to evaluate the expectative of the others. The individual enrolls an intense negotiation between his desires and the social norms. The meaning of a specific experience of consumption is influenced by the social risk of it.

The data collected provided some interesting insights about the influence of the feeling of shame over the consumption assumptions. The informants seemed to be very comfortable when talking about consumption experiences and we could go deep on the subject. During the analysis of the discourses collected we could find three main situations related to the feeling of shame:

1) Shame of a Bad Deal: when the man perceives the consumption experience as a bad deal;
2) Shame of Consumption Activity Inadequacies: when the man does not possess the good or service that could be used to inform about his place in the society and/or when some activity related to the consumption experience is considered inadequate to his gender;
3) Shame of Group Misleading: sometimes the consumer can feel himself inferior when he has to expose his consumption options to different groups.

Shame of a Bad Deal

A central emergent theme of the male discourses collected relates to the economic aspects of the consumption. The male consumer seems to be convinced that a bad deal is the worst situation of consumption and a shame elicitor. It is expected by society that men doesn’t waste money. Men concern a lot about cost and benefit:

“That car doesn’t worth what they are asking. I could have a bigger car to bring all my family to the beach with a few less bucks”. Engineer (42);

“I never buy anything unless I really need that thing. I think people waste too much money buying useless things. I only buy what is necessary for living comfortably with my family.” Engineer (37).

That consumer is saying he would feel ashamed to spend the amount of money required for buying a particular car model because the social group which he takes part, including his family, would not approve that choice. The feeling he expects to experience as the result of his buying behavior influences his consumption assumptions. Often the consumer tries to transfer the focus of the social evaluation to others.

“I don’t waste money and I don’t care about the latest technology or about fashion. Products should be functional and durable. This mobile phone I have (the latest model) was a gift from my children”. Accountant (42).

That consumer is trying to escape from the social evaluation of his acts. As a result he avoids having his consumption acts evaluated by the social group around him. His children (aged 7 and 9) do not have the money to buy him such an expensive gift, but when he associates the social evaluation of his buying behavior to his children he does not feel ashamed.

The matter of being ashamed of a bad deal also addresses to gender role in consumption. Men should be looking for utility while women are free to be concerned about futilities. The latter are not expected to be rational about shopping and can spend more while men are expected to look for the best benefit-cost ratio. The inadequacies of male consumer behavior are developed on the next section.

Shame of Consumption Activity Inadequacies

The information consumers get through all kinds of media makes the men anxious about possessing. Products are symbolic constructed in order to act as social information that is very important to men. The informants in this study were very keen on the influence of media and group pressure over some kinds of consumption but reproduce the expected behavior. Men do not want to fight the social norms; they accept it and try to behave in accordance to it.

“At the age of 25 I bought a pick-up truck. You know the girls love pick-ups. When you are 25 you should have a pick-up otherwise you would be considered less macho.” Administrator (39).

Men are ashamed of not having the good that could place him at the social level he thinks he deserves or where he would like to be. We were already expecting to find this kind of influence of shame over consumption assumptions. Not having a product or experienced some services put the man aside. The social norms disapprove the man that cannot consume.

Men care about the social approval of some activities involved within some consumption experiences. Men feel very proud of their capacity to research about technical specifications of computers or about the performance of a car. Search for information is an activity addressed to men. Male consumers care about the benefits of the consumption, as we have already discussed, so they should engage in such a “male” activity. They are proud of their knowledge about the car’s wheel size or valve command but do not like some other consumption activities.

“I don’t go to shopping malls, it is a waste of time. Women love to shop. We don’t. I know the location of three stores that I habitually buy. I park the car, walk straight to those stores, pay for what I have bought and go away”. Public Manager (40).

Some activities related to consumption as watching at shop-windows, trying products (mostly clothes), buying and, most of all,
carrying shopping bags were considered girls’ activities. Men seem to understand shopping as a female activity. It is not expected that a man could “waste” time.

The adequacy of the consumption activity addresses to the matter of gender roles in consumption. All informants were able to point out how a man should consume and seemed to be very ashamed of the experiences they had with their women.

There is a sense about which activity is appropriate for each gender. Men feel very uncomfortable and ashamed to participate on consumption activities expected to be performed by a woman. The evaluation of the social environment is negative and he feels disapproved by the group. The feeling of shame once again influences his consumption assumptions.

Shame of Group Misleading

Consumers are engaged in more than one social group nowadays. That means that they must be evaluated by different social norms. The informants had concerned about being able to satisfy those different standards, rules and goals. Some had manifested problems with that because they feel unable to get the approval of all the social groups he participates.

“I had contracted an interior decorator to choose the furniture and fittings. It would be a shame to receive my new job colleagues in an awful home.” Engineer (37).

In other cases the consumer had professional success and was ashamed of consuming because his older social group (family, friends from childhood) would disapprove such behavior—“When I visit my parents I go by bus. My old one could think I am wasting too much money” Lawyer (37). The setting of his consumption assumptions gets blurred because he gets classification systems from different social groups. As a result he cannot place the good or service in a specific position because there is not only one possibility of doing it. He would not like to show to his older social group that he cares about goods. Those ambiguous social evaluations make the man ashamed when not attend correctly to the group but he has to expose his consumption options to different groups.

CONCLUSION

This paper is dedicated to understand the influence of shame over male consumer behavior. Using an alternative method the authors could present an interpretation of the relationship between feelings and consumer values. The findings of this paper can encourage further development on the study of male emotions involved in consumption.

This interpretive study explored how the feeling of shame interferes on the consumptions assumptions. We argue that man can be ashamed of his desire and change it in order not make a bad deal. Possessing the good or service that can be used to inform about his place in the society or perform the correct consumption activity is also important to men. Men seem to be ashamed of not having the good that could identify them among the group or to perform some consumption activity that he thinks inadequate. Finally, men manage which kind of consumption pattern they want to present to the groups they take part of. Group misleading is also a source of shame to men.

In relation to conventional approaches studying emotions and consumption, this paper has attempted to offer an alternative analysis based on the social basis of emotions and the building of consumption assumptions. This approach enriches the understanding of the relationship between emotions and consumption and has practical consequences to marketing.

The feeling of shame is related to positive or negative stimuli for consumption and can emerge as consequence of some consumption experiences. The feeling of shame can build or change the meaning of a product or modify the consumer evaluation of it.

We must say that marketing practitioners are already used to work with feelings involved in consumption, but they can use this research as an orientation for the development of successful brands, products or advertising campaigns. Products that are involved in controversial market aspects and mixed feelings, such as preservatives, medicines or life insurance, can benefit mostly from the results of this study.

For the consumers this study can offer explanations to some of their consumption problems and make their consumption experiences in less painful moments. We enlighten the process of consumption and offer an explanation about the relationship between the feeling of shame and the configuration (and reconfiguration) of the meanings of consumption. The consumer can see the real intentions of marketing actions that involve the feeling of shame.

There is still a very long way to the complete understanding of human emotions at consumption. We could suggest that further studies should embrace other feelings related to consumption like love, happiness, sadness or anxiety. The study of human emotions could help the development of a broader understanding of the consumer behavior.

REFERENCES


The Decision Process of Products Under Continuous Innovation: Innovativeness, Consumer Goals and Perceived Innovation

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ABSTRACT
This exploratory study, based on a research with consumers of constant technologically updated products of personal use, aims to explore the relationships between innovativeness and perceived characteristics of the innovation, during the consumer’s decision process. The contribution of such analysis resides in conciliating the broad approach of the decision process, brought by the innovation theory, increasing the knowledge about the adopter’s profile and the way they make their decisions related to innovative products. The study attempts to comprehend the elements involved in a decision making process of innovations and how different adoption behavior leads consumers to use different strategies to achieve their goals during the choice process.

INTRODUCTION
Innovativeness and its relationship with the perceived characteristics of innovations have been vastly studied throughout the specialized literature (e.g. Midgley and Dowling 1978; Moore and Benbasat 1991; Rogers 2003). Even though there is a positive relationship between such variables, it seems necessary a further detailed analysis that explains the way this relationship occurs in the consumer’s decision process, regarding its degree of acceptance of innovation. The innovation theory is based on broad aspects related to the profile of the adopters, specially focusing on what happens in each of the adoption phases and characterizing their profiles.

The decision’s process theory, on the other hand, aims specific characteristics of how the consumers deal with the selection of a product or a service. This behavioral approach may be taken as a reference for a thorough comprehension of how the consumers structure their selecting strategies in the decision process of an innovation. This gap in the literature is the main focus of this paper.

Consumers may use a variety of strategies to solve decision process issues. In deciding the alternatives, people may compare and prefer product attributes and regard its functionalities (Lindberg et al. 1989). On the other hand, the rules that guide the decision may vary from simple and fast decision strategies to complex processes that require great attention and cognitive effort (Bettman et al. 1998; Chernov 2005). Besides, decision making demands an elaborate consumer’s structure to select an alternative in most buying decisions, which requires “constructing” its own preference structure. The basis of this process is the consumer’s goals, inherent to the decision process of most products and services (Bettman et al. 1998; Payne et al. 1993).

There isn’t, though, substantial knowledge about how the consumers goals are used by the consumers in the process of an innovation adoption, especially regarding personal use products, where it has been noted that, during the decision process, people face a huge amount of functionalities and buying alternatives. Based on the proposition that the consumer’s goals guide the decision strategies (Bettman et al. 1998), this research focuses on exploring which elements are present in the decision process for products that are continuously innovating and, therefore, analyzing how the consumers with different levels of innovativeness elaborate their decision rules based on different behaviors to reach these goals.

INOVATIVENESS AND PERCEIVED INNOVATION
Rogers (2003) defines innovation as an idea, practice or object perceived as new by the individual or another adopting unit. For a product, innovation will be considered for a specific consumer or market if its attributes or benefits are considered new when compared to the actual standard. An important consideration is brought by Hirschman (1981), in which the innovation can be classified under two dimensions: the symbolic and the technological.

According to the author, a symbolic innovation is the one that communicates different social meanings, relating to those presented. Its physical shape remains essentially unaltered, but the meaning transmitted by the new shape is new. The technological innovations are diffused according a set of principles different than the symbolic innovation. Some reasons that explain this difference are the fact that they can be adopted primarily according its performance characteristics and new functionalities rather than by its social symbolism. Therefore, the technological innovations are inherently more “different” and “discontinuous” than symbolical innovations.

Since people don’t adopt an innovation all concomitantly, individuals may be classified into categories of adopters. These categories include: (1) innovators, (2) early adopters, (3) early majority, (4) late majority and (5) laggards. These categories, identified by Rogers, are ideal types, concepts based on observations of reality proposed to allow possible comparing (Rogers 2003).

Hence, accepting an innovation is substantially slower right after its release, due to innumerable aspects, such as the need for investments in commercialization, advertisement, the initial resistance from the client in experimenting something not yet known, the intrinsic problems of new products, among other. After this period, the acceptance gains speed, because more adopters perceive the benefits and start experimenting the product. The next phase is the stabilization of acceptance, since the communication networks and the personal influence execute the diffusion and popularization of innovation, extracting from the product the characteristic of newness (Gatignon and Robertson 1991).

Furthermore, the innovation theory contemplates another controversial concept relating to the adoption of new products: the innovativeness. Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) define innovativeness or the tendency to innovate as the degree to which an individual adopts an innovation earlier than another member of its social system.

On the other hand, Midgley and Dowling (1978) argue that there is a weak relationship between innovativeness and the observable behavior (time of adoption), used for its measurement. These authors don’t agree that the time of adoption can be used to measure innovativeness, since it ignores the social dynamic that characterizes the diffusion process. To them, innovativeness is the degree to
which individuals are open to new ideas and make their innovation decisions independently from the communicated experience of others. They consider it a trace of personality that may be referred to as “innate innovativeness”, which acts on a more abstract level, influencing a variety of behaviors in specific domains, including the time of adoption of new products.

Another technique that has been used to measure innovativeness refers to the “possession of new products”, that consists in determining how many products from a previously specified list an individual bought until the time of the research.

The method also receives criticism, due to the difficulty of defining the categories of products selected, as well as the products in a category. Recently, some authors have been proposing measures to consumer’s innovativeness in specific domains, in a manner similar to the one used to measure attitudes, lifestyles and personality, as proposed by Goldsmith and Flynn (1992), used for this study.

The consumer’s innovation perception helps explain the different degrees of its adoption. According to the logic that, if consumers perceive innovations in different ways, then their behavior may also differ, Moore and Benbasat (1991) mention a construct based on the perceptions that the consumers have of the characteristics of an innovation.

Based on the studies of Rogers (2003), it can be verified five perceived characteristics that influence the adoption of an innovation. The relative advantage is the degree that one innovation is perceived as being better than the previous; compatibility is the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being consistent with the actual values and needs and the previous experiences of its potential adopters; complexity is the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being difficult to use; observability is the degree to which the results of an innovation may be observed by others, and; trialability is the degree an innovation may be experimented before the adoption of the product.

**DECISION PROCESS AND CONSUMER GOALS**

Rogers (2003) proposes a model for the decision process of innovations that classifies five distinct phases through which the adopter undergoes, from the moment he first gets to know about the innovation to the point where he adopts and later confirms this decision. It can be observed that the model, even though brings innovation to the point where he adopts and later confirms this decision maker remembered various details in the decision process.

Bettman (1979) proposed that consumers possess a hierarchy of goals, which they try to accomplish during the decision process of products or services and are pursued in most of the choice contexts. These goals are based on the theory of rational decision, in which consumers are motivated by the higher goal of maximizing the adequacy of the choice. The premise that people search for reasons to their choices derives especially from social psychology and decision making literature, which claim that people have a series of motives to justify their decisions, either for themselves or for the others (Simonson 1989).

As social beings, people have a tendency to feel evaluated by others and by themselves. Therefore, a satisfactory decision process will be the one that the decision maker can identify clear reasons to justify the final choice (Heitman et al. 2007). The need to justify the decision to themselves reflects the desire to reinforce their self-esteem, to anticipate regret and to be seen as rational beings, with logical reasons to prefer one option instead of another (Bettman et al. 1998).

Regarding external justification, Simonson (1989) argues that the consumers tend to pick alternatives that seem to be more justifiable to whom will evaluate their choices. This anticipated evaluation of what others might think may be centered in the idea that the decision maker is responsible of another, as a leader of opinion for instance, or that the others will be observing and evaluating their decision.

Luce, Bettman and Payne (2000) claim that, to some consumers, the choice process may lead negative emotions; hence, consumers tend to minimize it. These negative emotions are consequences of the decision difficulty between two or more attributes and the need to minimize the possibility of a negative experience derived from a bad experience. In this sense, Simonson (1989) suggests that the anticipation of regret is one of the main factors that guide the final product choice.

On deciding over high technology products, considered more complex due to the amount and variety of functionalities, the consumers face the task of identifying the attributes that are relevant. In this scenario, the experts tend to distinguish better between really relevant information than consumers that lack as much knowledge, and, so, they are able to identify appropriately the attributes that differentiate the most interesting options (Heitman et al. 2007). According to Bettman (1979), this behavior not only reduces the cognitive effort required to make a decision, but also allows consumers to identify the reasons for making an easier decision.

**METHODOLOGY**

In order to explore the relationships between variables pertaining the decision process, an exploratory qualitative methodology was conducted. The methodology consisted in semi-structured interviews, that contemplated well-tested aspects of thoroughly tested scales used to measure the variables at hand in quantitative approaches. The decision to use the quantitative scales as a basis to building the interview scripts derived from the fact that the constructs studied had broad conceptualizations, while the use of the scales guaranteed validity of the variables’ measurement, along with the time-saving benefit. Only candidates that had purchased an electronic product of personal use (e.g. cellular telephone, mp3 player, mp4 player, digital camera) in the three months preceding the data collection were selected, since the authors believed that the acquisition would reflect more clearly some of the research variables, but also because it was crucial that the product’s decision-maker understood as a more specific view of the process.

**METHOD**

In order to explore the relationships between variables pertaining the decision process, an exploratory qualitative methodology was conducted. The methodology consisted in semi-structured interviews, that contemplated well-tested aspects of thoroughly tested scales used to measure the variables at hand in quantitative approaches. The decision to use the quantitative scales as a basis to building the interview scripts derived from the fact that the constructs studied had broad conceptualizations, while the use of the scales guaranteed validity of the variables’ measurement, along with the time-saving benefit. Only candidates that had purchased an electronic product of personal use (e.g. cellular telephone, mp3 player, mp4 player, digital camera) in the three months preceding the data collection were selected, since the authors believed that the acquisition would reflect more clearly some of the research variables, but also because it was crucial that the product’s decision-maker remembered various details in the decision process.
Twenty-three interviews were conducted, of which nine where buyers of cellular telephones, seven had recently bought mp3 and mp4 players and seven decided upon the purchase of digital cameras. The respondents’ ages varied between 16 and 60 years, where 13 where male and 10 were female consumers.

About innovativeness, questions based on the studies of Goldsmith and Flynn (1992), according to Midgley and Dowling (1978), consider not only the consumer’s perception of time of adoption, but also the amount of electronic equipment possessed, when the consumer finds out about new equipments and related technologies, buying behavior (utility, design, promotions), getting information about the product, and the influence of the salesperson as well as the store’s.

About the perceived characteristics of innovation, the studies of Moore and Benbasat (1991) served as the guideline, vastly referenced in the diffusion of innovation literature. According to consumers’ goals, the authors decided to analyze three of them: the justification of the decision and the anticipation of the regret, that are used to reach a higher goal, the minimization of negative experiences.

To obtain data on consumer’s goals, the work of Bettman, Luce and Payne (1998) was utilized, complemented by the need to justify the decision discussed by Simonson (1989) revolving questions on external justifications and respondents’ attitudes towards justifying for themselves. This second type of justification was also used to comprehend the need to avoid regret, measured complementarily based on studies of Tsiros and Mittal (2000) and Heitman, Lehmann and Herrmann (2007).

All the interviews were recorded and the data analysis occurred via content analysis technique (Bardin, 1979). First, the focus resided on innovativeness, aiming to classify respondents in three major groups: (a) innovators and early adopters; (b) early majority, and; (c) late majority and laggards. The second phase consisted in distinguishing precisely the group of each respondent, specifically because in some situations there was doubt about the classification of some of the participants. To solve this issue, as a selection criterion, the authors verified the perceived characteristics of innovation. According to this, the following classification was obtained: 1 respondent was considered an innovator, 3 as early adopters, 10 are classified as early majority, 7 as late majority and 2 were considered laggards.

The third phase of the analysis considered the decision process, including a broad as well as a specific perspective, considering the classification obtained in the previous phases. In other words, the analysis of the decision process was executed for each of the groups mentioned, classified in phases 1 and 2.

RESULTS

Innovativeness

Among the respondents, only one of them has been classified as an innovator and three as the early adopters. These consumers not only possess more innovative products but also constantly update them and are aware of the innovations that are about to tap into the market. Besides, they seem to work as a source of information to their circle of friends, as can be observed in this passage: “My friends come ask me about the products I purchased. I am used to look up information frequently, because I am into technology, so people often come ask me. If the equipment is useful to me, that’s the one I’ll look for” (M., 27 years old).

The group considered as the early majority of adopters is composed of 9 participants, and were classified in this group because they are characterized for not immediately adopting the product, but for waiting some time until they can verify the product will be absorbed by the market: “I wait to see what happens, to make sure the product will successfully enter the market, to find out how the price settles and about the benefits they will offer along with the product.”(A., 33 years old)

The analysis of the late majority, 7 respondents, suggests that they purchase the product later than those in their social circle, possess lesser innovative equipments or less than the average and affirm to be aware of most recent technological innovations later than most people. When asked about how they gather information about products, most of them declare to count on their friends and relatives. Many respondents in this group seem not to like or need the help of the salespeople, as one interviewee mentioned: “I don’t like when the salesperson comes to show me the products, except when I have some doubt” (I., 27 years old).

Two respondents were classified as laggards, taking even longer time to purchase, possess even less products and know very little about them and never verify if they are available on the store. Their main source of information is their friends and relatives, and they hardly ever search actively for information. In fact, they even seem upset when exposed to information, as we can see in the following statement: “I like it when the salesperson shows me, but only quickly. If he starts showing me other equipments, I get annoyed” (D., 40 years old).

Consumers’ Goals

As observed by Bettman, Luce and Payne (1998), consumers attempt to minimize the possibility of encountering a negative experience and they do so by prioritizing two other goals: justifying the choice to themselves and to others and anticipating the possibility of regretting the decision. Due to the dependency relationship between these goals, the authors decided to focus in their analysis. Nonetheless, considering the context of analysis, the authors realized that these constructs were more relevant in consumers’ decision process. To innovators and early adopters, anticipating regret seems to be especially related with searching for product information, as mentioned by one of the respondents: “I look intensely for information, I check that [information on new electronic equipment] on an everyday basis”. (F., 35 years old)

The evaluation of the choice criteria seems to be objectively accomplished, based on specific product aspects, and, as such, can more easily justify their decision when compared to other consumers. Regarding high technology products, considered complex due to the amount and variety of functionalities, consumers face the task of identifying the most relevant attributes. The innovation represents a strong technological dimension (Hirschman 1981), since its adoption is related specially to the product’s performance characteristics and new functionalities.

Since innovators are also considered experts on the object of innovation, they tend to distinguish better real relevant information than consumers with less knowledge, and are able to identify the attributes that differentiate the most interesting options (Bettman 1979; Bettman et al. 1991; Heitman et al. 2007). According to Bettman (1979), this behavior reduces cognitive effort required to the decision-making, as well as easily identifies the reasons that underlie the decision.

In addition, innovators and early adopters seem to anticipate regret searching information about new equipment, and consequently, can solve the choice trade-offs more easily, since, according to Luce, Bettman and Payne (2000), they possess deeper knowledge in order to compare and assess the alternatives, which derives in minimizing negative emotions more easily. However, because consumers’ goals are inherent to most decision processes (Bettman et al. 1998), when they face a new product, mounted with a several attributes, respondents classified as late majority appear to
postpone the purchase decision until they obtain enough information to feel safe in selecting the product. The literature on decision process (e.g., Bettman et al. 1991, 1998) approaches this aspect and argue that one of the reasons for such behavior is the fact that they don’t have enough previous knowledge to evaluate the alternatives, which makes it more difficult to determine the decision rules.

Therefore, differently than innovators and early adopters, the group labeled early majority appears to beb more influenced by actions in the store and by the media, due to their belief they are anticipating regret and justifying the decision, specially to other people, as mentioned by one of the participants: “I like it, I get more comfortable, it’s a way of getting to know other models or even more equipments, even if you don’t buy it right there, at least you get to know about it… I like it, it’s great” (C., 25 years old).

However, due to their apparent reduced objective knowledge to evaluate the choice, these consumers tend to use external aspects such as the brand and the design, which doesn’t necessarily contribute for anticipating the regret. Some respondents claimed that searching information after the purchase derives in discovering a better product in the market: “I have looked for information after I bought and I regretted the purchase. I felt frustrated… For knowing I could have a better cell phone at hand” (R., 24 years old).

The analysis of the late majority group suggests anticipating regret seems to imply examining information before the purchase, especially through personal sources. After the purchase, 3 participants mentioned searching for more information, but this seems to be related to the insecurity about making the best choice: “…and then I start thinking: ‘what if I had looked some more for it?’ [in case of a wrong decision]” (Z. 30 years old)

The analysis of these consumers also suggests that they tend to justify their decision by the argument that the product corresponds to their needs or by the fact they identified a favorable cost-benefit situation. Also, it seems to be embedded in the decision processes of this group evidences of concernment about other people’s judgment: “If I saw someone with a better camera, I’d start doubting my own choice” (M.F., 50 years old).

The late majority seems to simply avoid justifying their decisions, or else they express some indifference towards other peoples’ judgment about their choices: “If I saw someone with a better mp3 player, I wouldn’t care and I’d keep satisfied with my choice” (A., 28 years old).

Anticipating regret, to the laggards, seems to mean obtaining just enough information in order to accomplish a decision, so that it seems they don’t ponder about a lot of attributes. The insecurity deriving from the fact that they depend on the information from others to make their own decisions seems to make them select simpler models, to simplify the process: “If I found out the choice I made was stupid [in that case, a bad one], I’d get frustrated. But since I was only looking for a simple cell phone, the chances of messing up are smaller” (D., 40 years old).

Perceived Characteristics Of Innovation

Regarding the innovators’ and early adopters’ cognitive structure towards the decision goals, the data obtained suggests significant influence of this cognitive structure on the way these consumers evaluate the perceived characteristics of the innovation. The specific literature (Gatignon and Robertson 1991; Rogers 2003) is particularly solid on the fact that there is a positive relationship between innovativeness and the perceived characteristics of innovations. However, consumer goals reveal differences about the arguments used by consumers to consider the product as an innovation.

The innovators seem to perceive the product as an advantage (relative advantage), evaluating especially the functional advantage first, claiming this aspect to be the purchase justification they use for themselves. The following passage exemplifies the idea: “The [electronic] products I buy, I use. I use every function, and I figure them out before the purchase, looking for more information about them on the internet” (M., 27 years old).

The advantage, though, seems to be related to the innovator’s social status, due to them serving as reference to others, and actually being eager to perform this role, as mentioned by one respondent: “When I buy something, I know what is the best product because I have looked up a lot of information. People even come up to me to ask me, and I think it is important to tell them what would be the appropriate equipment to them” (M., 27 years old).

The innovation compatibility also seems to be used by innovators and early adopters as a decision justification, especially considering the lifestyles and past experience: “I think it is compatible, because I am a guy that likes technology and technological innovation. I always have. So I think it is totally compatible” (F., 35 years old).

Complexity, on the other hand, appears to be minimized by the search of information about the equipment and the consumer’s previous knowledge, familiarized with new technologies. To these consumers, the easiness in utilizing the product’s functions may be a way of justifying the purchase, not only for themselves, but also to others. Besides, it seems to be a manner of avoiding regret, since knowing how to use the equipment’s functionalities presupposes utility, using this as a main choosing reason. Observability may also be important to the innovators, according to the fact that they serve as source of information to the ones around him. For that reason, possibly, they believe it is important to be seen with modern equipments, serving as a motive that justifies the decision.

The respondents labeled as early majority present as main characteristic the fact that they postpone their decision until they notice others consumers using the innovation. Regret mentioned by some of the respondents may reflect some dissatisfaction with the decision purchase, which influences negatively the perception about relative advantage, either in economic, functional or social status aspect (Rogers 2003). On the other hand, when these consumers are able to avoid regret, the criteria used in assessing the product are the main justification for the purchase. The next passage exemplifies it: “I even thought about what other people would think. At the moment, I thought: ‘Wow! I don’t want to be carrying around this junk. I’d rather have something smaller, something a little prettier’” (R., 24 years old).

Mostly, the purchase criteria are design aspects, since this is the main purchase justification, especially to others. In this sense, observability becomes a fundamental characteristic that guides consuming goals during the innovation’s decision process. “Yes, people notice it. I notice it too! Don’t take this the wrong way, but I like technology, and I’m always looking out for new stuff, and one of the ways to do it is by checking out people’s cell phones. I think there is a lot of status going on… People tend to relate their equipment with their status” (A., 32 years old).

The innovation’s compatibility of one’s needs and lifestyle with the trialability of the innovation appears to be as important to this group as to the previous group. The difference lies in the way the innovation is evaluated in these two factors. The people in this group mentioned that the product is compatible with aspects related to other people, having a modern equipment, being updated and be seen as such. One of the respondents declared: “Oh, yeah. This cell is very compatible with my lifestyle, listening some music, taking some pictures with my friends… It’s great to have such a new cell, it’s pretty modern, isn’t it?” (A., 19 years old)

Trialability seems to come as a result of handling their friends’ equipments, because this is a relevant source of information to these
consumers, since it is a characteristic of the innovation that serves to anticipate the regret in purchasing and, consequently, minimizing a possible negative experience deriving from product utilization.

Despite not considering the purchased equipment as complex, this group of respondents admit not knowing how to use some of the most advanced functions, because they don’t use it. A possible explanation for this behavior relies on the fact that the first choice criterion is design, prioritizing the products that look more modern, and that most of the times have functions that most consumers don’t know. However, it seems possessing this equipment has benefits like social status. “There are some things here that I still don’t know how to use, like Bluetooth, for example. I haven’t ever used. I think I should know some more about it, but I don’t actually use it. That’s why I don’t even try to find out...” (N, 23 years old)

Finally, the group containing respondents labeled as late majority and laggards, declares the existence of compatibility between the equipment purchase and their personal needs, possibly due to the small expectations preceding the purchase of the device. On this characteristic resides the justification for the lacking of trialability before the purchase: “I only checked out the main menu… I didn’t really check it out much… But that didn’t embarrass me… Actually, I didn’t really want to try it out! I had already made up my mind. I ended up learning my way through after I bought it, as I went along with it...” (D, 40 years old)

In this group, there are no evidences of a consensus on the complexity with using the equipment, with some consumers mentioning the use of manuals and other informational sources in order to redeem difficulties in using the device. Some participants state having pondered about the products’ easiness: “On using my cell, that is pretty basic, I don’t think so… I guess I know how to do everything I need to. But sometimes I see some people with cell phones that seem really hard to figure out. I guess I wouldn’t wanna buy any of those...” (D., 40 years old)

Observability, however, is an aspect that seems to be confirmed by this group of consumers. The next statement exemplifies it: “Yes, obviously [on the idea of people judging other people’s equipments], There is an image being projected when someone is using a camera. It is important to consider this, but it is not as important as some other stuff. If I had some worse camera, I would still use it. I wouldn’t stop using it.” (I., 26 years old)

**DISCUSSION**

The contribution of this research is, not only in verifying the relationship proposed by the literature between innovativeness and perceived characteristics of the innovation, but also exploring the basis of this relationship, through the analysis of the consumer goals proposed by Bettman, Luce and Payne (1998).

In analyzing consumer goals along with the different levels of innovativeness and perceptions of the innovation, evidences indicate that they represent a source of minimization of possible negative experience derived from the decision. The analysis of the innovativeness indicated that, differently from the late majority and laggards, early adopters seem to be as interested in the product as innovators, even though they don’t feel as confident about the decision-making. Apparently, they strongly feel the need of personal and experimental sources of information, beyond the commercial ones. They tend to check if the product is being used by other consumers. Compared to the former group, this group seems to avoid risk at a higher degree, explaining their need to wait and confirm the product’s acceptance by the market. Luce, Bettman and Payne (2000) suggest that consumers with greater risk avoidance tend to postpone the purchase until they feel sufficiently safe and, consequently, their goal of minimizing negative experience becomes even more relevant.

Therefore, the innovators and early adopters apparently tend to evaluate attributes based on technical aspects of the product, justifying the purchase of an equipment relatively more complex in an easier manner than the other consumers. In this sense, the innovation performs a strong role in the technological dimension (Hirschman 1981), since its adoption is related primarily to characteristics of its performance and its new functionalities. Besides, the literature (Bettman 1979; Bettman et al 1991; Heitman et al 2007) argues that as soon as consumers reduce the cognitive effort required to accomplish the decision, they are able to identify the reasons for that decision easily.

The indifference about the innovation of the late majority and the laggards derives possibly from different consumer goals compared to other groups. These consumers simply are not interested for this type of innovations, what opens the possibility for more studies on the psychographic profile to comprehend their behavior.

As the literature indicates (Gatignon and Robertson 1991; Rogers 2003), the higher the degree of innovativeness, the more positive the perception of the innovation. However, as predicted by the study, the consumption goals influence the way these characteristics are evaluated. Therefore, the relative advantage to the innovators and early adopters appears to be is functional and social, due to serving as a source of information to the other consumers. The early majority, on the other hand, seem to perceive social prestige deriving from being seen as users of modern equipments, with an updated design, denoting the importance of observability.

The data suggests that the evaluation of this group on trialability is a consequence of the experience in handling their friends’ equipments, since this is a relevant source of information to this group of consumers, serving as a mechanism of anticipating regret from the purchase, and, subsequently, minimizing a possible negative experience derived from the product’s utilization.

To late majority and laggards, there is no trace of positive perception about the characteristics of innovation, possibly because, once they purchase the product, there always seems to be a modern equipment available in the market. This behavior also appears to reflect the goal of avoiding regret with the purchase. However, this group also postpones the purchase due to the lack of interest in the product.

**CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

This study attempted to contribute theoretically to comprehension of the decision process of products considered relatively complex to consumers, especially due to the variety of attributes and options available. This context provided the adequate scenario for analyzing consumers’ goals (e.g. Bettman et al 1991; Bettman et al 1998) and their influence on consumers’ decision and perception of innovation.

The research encountered evidences of the adoption process of complex products as driven by consumer goals that motivated the acquisition of innovations. However, how these goals are reached apparently differ according to their innovativeness. The rules used by the consumers to make decision possibly depend on the nature of the product, the social context of its use, the motivations and interests of the decision-makers, and their cognitive capacity (Heitman et al 2007; Payne et al 1993). Hence, due to advances of recent personal use technologies, that converge diverse equipments into a single device, one of the most challenging issues for the companies that act in these segments is to comprehend the consumers’ decision process.
It is important to emphasize, however, that this study is fundamentally exploratory and, thus, these findings are inconclusive. Moreover, despite the advantages offered by the qualitative research, this one has clearly some limitations such as the generalization of results in field. Further research can corroborate quantitatively the results presented, or can explore even more deeply the structure of the relationships proposed in this study.

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The Adoption of Innovations in High Technology Products by Young People: The Case of the Cellular Phone
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ABSTRACT
The aim of this study is to analyze how the introduction of new attributes, generally considered complex, affects the adoption of high technology products by consumers. As such, the relationships between personal characteristics and the interpersonal influences of consumers have been evaluated, considering the difficulties of decision making in the adoption of technological innovations in cellular phones. There were two stages to the field research: the first was qualitative, with in-depth interviews with consumers and professionals in the field of cellular telephones; the second was quantitative, involving 303 university students aged 17 to 25 who owned a cellular phone. The results obtained show that the independent variables analyzed had a great deal of influence on the adoption of new generation telephones. The moderating variable “Difficulty to Decide” had a relatively heavy influence on the adoption of innovations in cellular phones.

INTRODUCTION
Nowadays, technological innovations are happening at an impressive rate. It is often the case that when a person finally learns how to use a product, it becomes obsolete and is superseded by a more advanced version. In some cases, the speed of the launching of novelties is faster than their diffusion and familiarization. Moreover, gadgets that once had few functions and only a few buttons to press have become much more complex with the introduction of new features. A certain amount of effort is directed in learning how to use the gadget before all these new functions can be properly used.

In this sense, the introduction of new or even completely unknown attributes in gadgets, which make them complicated to use, may lead the consumer to perceive a dichotomy concerning the novelty, and this can be positive or negative. This perception, together with the personal and emotional characteristics of the consumer, can affect whether the product will be adopted: the consumer may believe that the innovation is too complex and that it would take a great deal of effort to learn how to use it and that the product is not worth buying; or, he may also be in doubt as to whether he should postpone the purchase and find out more about it or wait for a friend to buy the product and reduce his uncertainty.

The main aim of this study is to analyze how far personal characteristics, perceived characteristics and interpersonal influences and difficulty to decide affect the adoption of technological cell phone innovations by young people, according to the diffusion paradigm of innovation adoption by consumers of Gatignon and Robertson (1991).

DIFFUSION PARADIGM OF INNOVATIONS AMONG CONSUMERS
There are several definitions of innovation in the diffusion literature. Rogers (2003, p. 12) defines innovation as “an idea, practice or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption”. He also states that it matters little whether an idea is objectively new or not; what really matters is the reaction of an individual, i.e., if the idea is new to him, then it is an innovation.

To overcome the gap found in studies about diffusion among consumers, Gatignon and Robertson (1985) introduced a new theoretical proposal to advance in these studies and developed a model of the diffusion process. To formulate their model, Gatignon and Robertson (1991) used Rogers’ fundamental concepts of the diffusion theory as a basis. Therefore, the main elements of the diffusion paradigm are: innovation and its characteristics; the social system within which the innovation is diffused; the diffusion process that occurs; the adoption process by the individual consumer; the interpersonal influence that is transmitted; personal characteristics of the innovators and other adopters; the marketing strategy for the innovation and competitive activities within the product category. According to the authors, the model is not exhaustive and more interactions may take place. Each construct may also be prepared in a more complete way.

In this study, we analyze personal characteristics (familiarity, expertise, prior knowledge and the tendency to innovate), perceived characteristics and interpersonal influences. To the paradigm, we have added another element: Difficulty to Decide. This is a measuring variable. The rationale behind including this variable is to verify how the affective aspects of Difficulty to Decide influence the decision-making process. According to Souza (2002), there are few academic studies that investigate the role of emotions in behavior when it comes to the adoption of technology.

Familiarity is an important characteristic in the adoption of innovations. Alba and Hutchinson (1987) define this concept as “the number of experiences with related products that have been accumulated by the consumer” (p. 411).

Johnson and Russo (1984) studied the impact of consumers’ familiarity on their capacity to seek and learn new information. When consumers evaluate every alternative they have, familiarity facilitates learning. However, when consumers are instructed to choose an alternative, a higher degree of familiarity results in a limited search and less learning of new information. This is also confirmed in the study of Anderson and Jolson (1980).

Consumer knowledge is an important construct, being utilized to understand the behavior of those seeking information (Brucks, 1985; Rao & Sieben, 1992) and processing consumer information (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987; Bettman & Park, 1980; Johnson & Russo, 1984, Rao & Monro, 1988). Park, Mothersbaugh and Feick (1994) analyzed the evaluation of consumer knowledge, which may be relative to information concerning the product or some previous experience with it. According to these authors, knowledge can be objective or subjective. Objective knowledge is “accurate information about a class of products stored in the memory in the long term” (p. 71). Self-assessed or subjective knowledge is “people’s perception of what or how much they know about a class of products” (p. 71). This separation of knowledge into two constructs was also done by Brucks (1985), Park and Lessig (1981) and recognized by Wood and Lynch (2002).

The results of the study by Park, Mothersbaugh and Feick (1994) demonstrate that evaluation of knowledge is based more on memory of experience with a product (through a search for information about the product, use of the product and/or ownership of the product) than on memory of information about the product.
technology is more related to the motivation of the consumer to deal with the paradoxes of technology and the emotions he has experienced than with his degree of innovativeness or technical competence (MICK & FOURNIER, 1998; FOURNIER & MICK, 1999; SOUZA, 2002).

Luce, Payne and Bettman (1999) demonstrated that trade-offs by consumers can be qualitatively different from one another and that these differences have a significant impact on choice patterns.

In this study, difficulty to decide will be evaluated by emotional trade-off difficulty which, according to Luce, Payne and Bettman (1999, p. 144), may be defined as “the level of subjective threat that a decision maker associates when making an explicit trade-off between two attributes”.

According to Luce (1998), the difficulty of trade-offs leads to increased negative emotion when there is no option of decision avoidance, as in keeping the status quo. The choice of avoidance (keeping the status quo or doing nothing) may be satisfactory as it means achieving success through minimization of explicitly confronting the consequences of potentially negative difficult trade-offs. In other words, the greater the difficulty to decide, the greater the level of decision avoidance.

In a situation involving a decision, the main determiners of a primary evaluation are the identity attributes (e.g. highly emotional attributes such as state of health), value attributes (e.g. when the focus is on potential loss or gain) and the social context of the decision. In a secondary evaluation, the main determiner in a situation involving decision is the cognitive context of the choice. The attributes may vary along with multiple dimensions, including moral factors, importance and the cognitive facility to process the information concerning the attributes. The main result of this decision situation is an evaluation of the trade-off difficulty. The trade-off difficulty, in its turn, leads to a negative emotional experience during the choice and also to a behavior of managing difficulties to achieve success. The strategies used to deal with emotional trade-off difficulties will influence the quantity and the pattern of the decision making process (LUCE, BETTMAN & PAYNE, 2001).

The evaluation of trade off difficulty and the secondary evaluation are affected by the availability of avoidance options and by the cognitive aspects of the context. The absence of an avoidance option and the choice of a low quality option lead to greater trade-off difficulty, i.e., high rates of negative experiences (LUCE, BETTMAN & PAYNE, 2001). Furthermore, according to these authors, the final emotional reaction concerning a choice is a function both of the trade-off difficulty and the availability and efficacy of strategies to deal with these difficulties.

Therefore, the relationship between difficulty to decide and the other variables of the model may be expressed thus:

H3: The greater the difficulty to decide, the weaker the relationship between (a) familiarity, (b) prior knowledge, (c) the tendency to innovate and (d) interpersonal influence in the adoption of innovations by the consumer.

Proposed Model

For the general aim of this study, and based on the outlined theoretical approach, a research model is proposed in Figure 1.

METHODOLOGY

To achieve our objectives, descriptive research was carried out, with a single transversal study. This study was carried out in two stages. The first was the preparatory qualitative stage, or an exploratory nature, with ten in-depth interviews with users of cell phones and three interviews with professionals in the field of telephones in order to obtain the necessary information in order to
develop the questionnaire. The methodological recommendations of Babbie (1999) and Creswell (2003) were followed in order to make the interviewee comfortable to speak freely in an informal setting and so that the answers would be as reliable as possible. All the interviews were recorded, transcribed and analyzed.

The second stage was carried out by quantitative research, using the survey method through the application of structured questionnaires. These were collected in November, 2004 at higher learning institutions in a city in the south of Brazil.

The target population was made up of undergraduate students aged 17-25 who owned cell phones. These people were chosen because young people have the highest potential to consume and their behavior is constantly evolving (FERREIRA, 2003). The cell phone was chosen as it was a relatively new product on the Brazilian market and was showing high growth in the rate of sales and adoption. Under-twenty-five-year-olds exchange their telephone once a year, while older people tend to change them once every two years. Furthermore, in one year, young Brazilians spend ten billion reais on cell phones (VEJA, 2003). Undergraduate students were chosen because they have greater access to sources of information and are more likely to be well informed about innovations in high technology products than the rest of the population. Nonetheless, the sample’s age definition is justified by the attempt to use a homogeneous sample, eliminating possible biases in the empirical data analysis, deriving from the different consumer profiles.

The sampling technique employed was non-probabilistic for convenience. A total of 360 questionnaires were completed. Forty-four of these were not considered valid because the respondents were over the age of twenty-five. A further thirteen were excluded because they were incomplete or incorrectly answered.

**Measurements**

**Familiarity:** These variables were measured on a five-point intensity scale (from very little to very large) of the usage frequency (familiarity) of some cell phone functions. A factor analysis applying principal components with Varimax rotation was used to group the items of the scale of this variable. In the previous qualitative study, three levels of ability were identified. Therefore, an a priori three factor determination was utilized. As a final result, factor 1 (Explained variance=19.00%; Cronbach’s Alpha=0.845) represents the advanced functions group, with items such as cameras, games/image/video downloads, e-mail, etc. Factor 2 (Explained variance=14.46%; Cronbach’s Alpha=0.818) represents the basic functions group, with items such as make/receive calls, send/receive SMS. Factor 3 (Explained variance=13.00%; Cronbach’s Alpha=0.688) represents the intermediate functions group, with items such as games, ring tone downloads, alarms, etc. Measured Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)=0.847.

**Prior Knowledge:** In order to measure the subjective Prior Knowledge, a five-point intensity scale was applied, ranging from very poor to very good knowledge of cell phones, with items such as the respondent’s knowledge about his cell phone, about cell phones in general and recent innovations in cell phones. The Cronbach’s Alpha=0.782 indicates an appropriate internal consistency. Amongst the respondents, 35% declared to have high subjective Prior Knowledge of cell phones. Objective Prior Knowledge was measured by the number of correct answers about cell phones, with multiple choice questions about GSM, MMS, WAP, polyphonic tunes, roaming, etc. From a total of seven questions, less than 25% of the respondents scored more than five.

**Innovativeness:** This variable was measured in two parts. The first one approached some consumption habits of general products, by means of a seven-point Likert scale with statements like these: “I usually try new brands rather than usual brands”; “I search for more information when I hear about a new product or service for the first time”. A factor analysis applying principal components with Varimax rotation was used to group the items of the scale of this variable. As a final result, factor 1 (Explained variance=23.31%; Cronbach’s Alpha=0.820) represents the pioneer people, because they are the first one to buy some new product. Factor 2 (Explained variance=15.65%; Cronbach’s Alpha=0.732) represents the people who seek novelties. Factor 3 (Explained variance=12.73%; Cronbach’s Alpha=0.683) represents the people who usually try novelties. Measured Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)=0.813.

The second part was evaluated according to the ownership of some innovative products, such as digital cameras, DVD recorders, plasma monitors, etc. The purpose was to generate a more objective innovativeness score. This question was evaluated by multiple correspondence analysis. The input for multiple correspondence analysis, also known as homogeneity analysis (HOMALS), is the usual rectangular data matrix, where the rows represent objects, and the columns represent variables (Marchetti, Prado & Pires, 1998; SPSS, 1998). It was noted that the points that represent product ownership come near to a parabola, indicating the presence of the Guttman Effect. Therefore, the horseshoe-shaped curve may be used to indicate the products with more or less adoption rate by the respondents (Marchetti, Prado & Pires, 1998). The final outcome is a score table, according to the ownership of the appraised products,
Therefore, hypothesis H1a was partially corroborated. These re-
with basic functions and adoption (B=-0.405; W=6.564; p=0.010).

A possible explanation for this negative relationship may lie in 
what Mick and Fournier (1998) call a “technology paradox”. 
According to these authors, emotions have a significant influence 
on consumers, leading them to define the strategies they utilize to 
purchase these products. In this case, it is likely that these consum-
ers adopt a compensatory strategy, seeking more information on the 
technology and its attributes and benefits, which may lead them to 
postpone adoption for a while.

The results also reveal that there is a significant and negative relationship between 
interpersonal influence and adoption (B=-

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<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Wald</th>
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<td>0.203</td>
<td>4.073</td>
<td>0.044*</td>
<td>1.225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiarity– Basic</td>
<td>-0.405</td>
<td>6.564</td>
<td>0.010*</td>
<td>0.667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiarity– Intermediate</td>
<td>0.788</td>
<td>16.280</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
<td>2.198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiarity– Advanced</td>
<td>0.607</td>
<td>4.748</td>
<td>0.029*</td>
<td>1.835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Influence– Total</td>
<td>-0.419</td>
<td>3.979</td>
<td>0.046*</td>
<td>0.658</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 1**
Logistic Regression between All Variables and Adoption–Total Sample

**PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS**

Everyone in the sample was aged between 17 and 25. 48.8% belong to the upper classes (A1 and A2) and 41.2% were middle 
class (B1 and B2). 90.3% have their own income, including an 
allowance. Furthermore, 52% stated that their personal income was 
over 800 reais.

A logistic regression analysis model was utilized (SPSS, 
1999). The results of this regression can be seen in Table 1.

Hypothesis H1b: “the greater the prior knowledge, the higher the 
adoption rate” had a significant and positive result for the score of 
 prior objective knowledge and adoption (B=0.203; W=4.073; 
p=0.044). This means that the respondents who answered a higher 
number of questions concerning cell phone equipment correctly, 
thereby showing greater objective prior knowledge, tend to purchase 
cell phones with more advanced innovative functions.

However, subjective prior knowledge had no significant relationship with adoption. Therefore, hypothesis H1b was partially 
corroborated. Luce, Payne and Bettman (1999) argue that subjective 
knowledge would have more influence on adoption than objective 
knowledge, which was not the case in this study. One 
reason for this may lie in the adoption process, i.e., people who have 
greater technical knowledge tend to adopt an innovation more 
quickly because they need to seek more information, unlike other 
consumers, who tend to find out more before deciding to purchase.

We can see that there is a positive relationship between 
Innovativeness/Pioneer and adoption (B=0.418; W=8.432; p=0.004). 
This means that people who normally acquire novelties are more likely to adopt a new cell phone. The definition of tendency to 
innovate in the view of Rogers (2003) theoretically means adopt-
on. On the other hand, people who normally seek new things had a 
negative relationship with adoption (B=-0.350; W=7.176; 
p=0.007). Therefore, hypothesis H1c was corroborated for the 
relationship between adoption and Innovativeness/Pioneer. But for 
Innovativeness/Pioneers we see a significant, but negative, relationship. For the other levels of innovativeness, the hypothesis was 
not corroborated.

Hypothesis H1d suggests a positive relationship between prior 
objective knowledge and adoption. On the other hand, subjective 
knowledge had no significant relationship with adoption. Therefore, hypothesis H1e was partially corroborated. These results 
are in keeping with those of Park and Lessing (1981), as the 
authors found that consumers with a high degree of familiarity tend to adopt a product more quickly than anyone else.

Hypothesis H1f: the greater the prior knowledge, the higher the 
adoption rate” had a significant and positive result for the score of 
 prior objective knowledge and adoption (B=0.203; W=4.073; 
p=0.044). This means that the respondents who answered a higher 
number of questions concerning cell phone equipment correctly, 
thereby showing greater objective prior knowledge, tend to purchase 
cell phones with more advanced innovative functions.

However, subjective prior knowledge had no significant relationship with adoption. Therefore, hypothesis H1b was partially 
corroborated. Luce, Payne and Bettman (1999) argue that subjective 
knowledge would have more influence on adoption than objective 
knowledge, which was not the case in this study. One 
reason for this may lie in the adoption process, i.e., people who have 
greater technical knowledge tend to adopt an innovation more 
quickly because they need to seek more information, unlike other 
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relationship between adoption and Innovativeness/Pioneer. But for 
Innovativeness/Pioneers we see a significant, but negative, relationship. For the other levels of innovativeness, the hypothesis was 
not corroborated.

A possible explanation for this negative relationship may lie in 
what Mick and Fournier (1998) call a “technology paradox”. 
According to these authors, emotions have a significant influence 
on consumers, leading them to define the strategies they utilize to 
purchase these products. In this case, it is likely that these consum-
ers adopt a compensatory strategy, seeking more information on the 
technology and its attributes and benefits, which may lead them to 
postpone adoption for a while.

The results also reveal that there is a significant and negative relationship between interpersonal influence and adoption (B=

ranging from −1.71 to 2.75, with mean=0.00 and Standard Devia-
tion=1.00.

**Personal Influences:** This variable was measured by a five-
point intensity scale, ranging from never consulted to frequently consulted. A factorial analysis was performed to determine the 
existence of consulted source groups. The method used was factor 
analysis, with Varimax rotation. Theoretically, two groups were 
expected: strong reference source (personal) and weak reference 
source (impersonal) (Pires & Marchetti, 2000). Therefore, an a 
priori two-factor determination was used. As a final result, Factor 
1 (Explained variance=26.30%; Cronbach’s Alpha=0.737) repre-
sents the weak reference source group, with items such as the 
internet, magazines, cell phone experts, etc. Factor 2 (Explained 
variance=22.99%; Cronbach’s Alpha=0.772) represents the strong 
reference source group, with items such as friends and colleagues. 
Measured Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)=0.715. If the scale is consid-
ered as a whole (all nine items together), the measured Cronbach’s 
Alpha=0.740.
TABLE 2
Regression between All Variables and Adoption Considering Difficulty to Decide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Greater Difficulty to Decide Cluster</th>
<th>Less Difficulty to Decide Cluster</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Wald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovativeness – Pioneer</td>
<td>-0.417</td>
<td>6.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovativeness – Seek Novelties</td>
<td>-0.474</td>
<td>6.874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovativeness – Try Novelties</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>0.089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovativeness – Homals</td>
<td>-0.155</td>
<td>0.744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Prior Knowledge</td>
<td>-0.164</td>
<td>0.462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective Prior Knowledge</td>
<td>0.231</td>
<td>3.367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiarity – Basic</td>
<td>-0.272</td>
<td>1.745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiarity – Intermediate</td>
<td>0.674</td>
<td>8.765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiarity – Advanced</td>
<td>0.694</td>
<td>5.102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Influence – Total</td>
<td>-0.380</td>
<td>2.249</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: Research Data

0.419; W=3.979; p=0.046). This means that the more important personal influence is (from strong and weak sources), the lower the adoption rate of innovations in cell phones with more advanced functions. Thus, hypothesis H2 was not corroborated.

This result can be compared with some other studies (LASCU & ZINKHAN, 1999; BETTMAN, LUCE & PAYNE, 1998, BURNKRANT & COUSINEAU, 1975), which claim that individual desire to obtain acceptance within the group may be one of the reasons for this conformity that we see in a favorable response to influence. This conformity, in its turn, is defined as a change that takes place in evaluations, intentions to purchase or behavior resulting from exposure of the consumer to the evaluations, intentions and behavior of other individuals.

In this context, the lower rate of adoption may stem from the influence of other people, which is also in keeping with the result for the relationship with prior objective knowledge, since consumers with more technical acumen tend to be less influenced by the group. These consumers have less need to justify their decisions to the other members of the group and obtain their approval because they have more objective knowledge that allows them to make this choice by themselves.

Adoption Considering Difficulty to Decide

In order to examine the moderating variable Difficulty to Decide, the database was initially divided into groups based on perception of the level of importance of different attributes of cell phones and the level of perceived stress in the case of a wrong decision. This composition followed the results suggested by Luce, Payne and Bettman (1999), in which the difficulty should be verified not only in its cognitive dimensions but also concerning the affective aspects involved.

An exploratory Latent Class analysis was carried out to separate the groups in which one variable with latent k-classes is utilized to define the association between the groups formed with the observed variables. Each latent class and each cluster groups similar cases together (Prado, 2004). The results displayed two clusters: “less difficulty to decide” and “greater difficulty to decide”.

Therefore, the prior evaluation for the whole group was repeated again for each cluster. The effects of “greater difficulty to decide” and “less difficulty to decide” were given a logistic regression analysis.

Beginning the analysis with the cluster with greater difficulty to decide, familiarity with basic functions changed their relationship with adoption and was not significant when moderated by difficulty to decide. This result may be accounted for by the low complexity of these functions, which are found in almost every cell phone and which, despite being important, are not decisive attributes during the purchasing process.

When familiarity with intermediate and advanced functions and its relationship with adoption are analyzed, the results indicate that difficulty to decide does not affect the results, with the relationship being statistically significant and positive. However, familiarity with intermediate functions and the affect on adoption becomes weaker, although it does remain significant (B=0.674; W=8.765; p=0.003) and the relationship of familiarity with advanced functions becomes even more significant when moderated by Difficulty to Decide. This result corroborates some studies (PARK & LESSING, 1981; GATIGNON & ROBERTSON, 1991), which show that the experience of the consumer tends to accelerate the adoption process.

Furthermore, objective prior knowledge is significant and positive for adoption by the group with greater difficulty to decide (B=0.231; W=3.367; p=0.066), but this relationship is weaker when the moderating effect of Difficulty to Decide comes into play (see Table 1).

This result suggests that prior knowledge tends to help consumers who feel that it is more difficult to decide which cell phone to buy. Bettman, Luce and Payne (1998) claim that personal characteristics such as expertise, familiarity with the product and
prior knowledge tend to facilitate the process of choosing and storing difficulties with decision making. Moreover, the consumer manages to deal better with trade-offs he comes up against during the purchase (BETTMAN, JOHNSON & PAYNE, 1991; LUCE, 1998; LUCE, BETTMAN & PAYNE, 2001).

There is a positive and statistically significant relationship between Innovativeness/Pioneerism and adoption when considering Difficulty to Decide (B=0.417; W=6.031; p=0.014). However, if these results are compared with the results obtained without considering Difficulty to Decide, the relationship becomes weaker, despite remaining significant.

For Innovation/Pioneer there is a negative relationship with adoption (B=-0.474; W=6.874; p=0.009). In this case, difficulty to decide heightened the tendency of the consumer not to adopt. A possible explanation for this may be that these results constitute a so-called “paradox of technology” as propounded by Mick and Fournier (1998), which assumes that emotions act on consumers and influence the strategies they use for choosing technological products.

Adoption time for technology by these consumers may have more to do with emotional aspects such as a need to acquire status, to be modern and to use a hi-tech product, a tendency that is common among the young. Bettman, Johnson and Payne (1991) argue that if there is a heavy emotional influence, the consumer tends to adopt more compensatory strategies to seek out information and compare the alternatives, which may postpone adoption should he feel any difficulty to decide.

When considering the moderating effect of Difficulty to Decide, the relationship between interpersonal influences and adoption is not significant (B=-0.380; W=2.249; p=0.134).

In this context, considering the group of respondents with greater difficulty to decide, hypothesis H3a was corroborated only for familiarity with intermediate functions. Hypothesis H3g was not corroborated for subjective prior knowledge, only for objective prior knowledge. Hypothesis H3c was corroborated only for the innovativeness of pioneers and those who seek novelties. Hypothesis H3w was not corroborated.

Analyzing the cluster with less difficulty to decide, the data indicates that six variables changed their relationship with adoption: Innovativeness/Pioneerism, Innovativeness/Seek Novelties, Objective Prior Knowledge, Familiarity (Advanced) and Interpersonal Influences ceased to have any statistically significant relationship with adoption.

On the other hand, Innovativeness/Homals had a statistically significant and negative relationship with adoption considering that there was less Difficulty to Decide (B=-0.782; W=5.519; p=0.019). A possible explanation for this could be the motives for using the equipment because there are probably some consumers who are simply not interested in adopting an innovation even when they have no difficulties in dealing with the choice process. Since the innovativeness of these consumers is already lower, if they feel the slightest difficulty, their Innovativeness drops further still.

The difficulty to adopt, however small it may be, strengthened the negative relationship between familiarity with basic functions and adoption (B=-0.962; W=8.771; p=0.003). Moreover, the difficulty to decide weakened the relationship between familiarity with intermediate functions and adoption (B=1.176; W=7.237; p=0.007).

Thus, for this group with less difficulty to decide, hypothesis H3a was confirmed for familiarity with basic functions and not corroborated for familiarity with intermediate functions and familiarity with advanced functions. Hypothesis H3b was not corroborated. Hypothesis H3c was confirmed for Innovativeness/Homals and for the rest it was not corroborated. Hypothesis H3d was also not corroborated.

**FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The qualitative research had shown some interesting relationships between the variables analyzed in this study. Despite the motivations for buying (and the respective adoption) having varied among the interviewees, we noted that most of those who had shown familiarity, prior knowledge and greater Innovativeness had purchased equipment with the innovations mentioned. However, there were exceptions. One interviewee, who had shown little interest in technology and little prior knowledge of cell phones, was the one who had owned most cell phone equipment of all those involved in the study and her current telephone was one of the latest models. Another interviewee showed exactly opposite characteristics and yet owned an older model of telephone.

The quantitative research showed that, among the participants, the independent variables had an influence on the adoption of the latest generation of cell phones. The moderating variable Difficulty to Decide had some influence on the adoption. However, this influence was not seen for all the proposed relationships. One possible explanation for these results concerns certain characteristics of the respondents. They were a homogenous group with very similar socio-economic backgrounds. Furthermore, the product chosen in constantly evolving, every month numerous new cell phone models with new functions are launched in the market and new services are constantly being introduced by cell phone providers. This fact may have hindered the understanding of the innovation on the part of the respondents (“old generation” versus “new generation”).

When only the relationships between independent variables (familiarity, prior knowledge, Innovativeness and interpersonal influence) and adoption were tested, almost all the relationships were significant, in keeping with the theory. Nevertheless, bearing in mind the type of product analyzed and the characteristics of the group of people analyzed, there were some differences in relation to what was proposed in hypotheses H1 and H2. The negative relationship between familiarity with basic functions and adoption is an example, which may be accounted for by the nature of these functions. As they are found in almost all cell telephones, they did not have a decisive influence on the adoption of the technology.

Moreover, subjective prior knowledge had no influence on adoption, which goes against the theory (see LUCE, PAYNE & BETTMAN, 1999; GATIGNON & ROBERTSON, 1991). As what was analyzed was the adoption of a hi-tech product that is constantly being updated, the heavier influence of objective knowledge on adoption may be justified in this case.

Interpersonal influence had a negative and statistically significant relationship with adoption, contrary to the theory. Once again, this difference from what is said in the literature may be accounted for by the context, since young people are highly involved with cell phones, which could be directly linked with the desire of these consumers to be accepted by their group and paying more attention to the opinions of others. This conformity may lead them to postpone the adoption of a new technology.

When considering the moderating factor of the variable Difficulty to Decide, some results are also different from the theory and many relationships were not corroborated. This may be due in part to the limitations of the study. On the other hand, it may serve as a warning that the theory of diffusion of innovations cannot be generalized for all products and types of consumers.

By adding up the results obtained in the qualitative and quantitative research, it is believable that there are still more variables that have a stronger relationship with adoption which were not considered in this study and which may help us to understand better the adoption process of innovations in hi-tech products.
Limitations and suggestions for future studies

This study has some limitations. The first concerns the sample, as the sampling technique was non-probabilistic. According to Malhotra (2001), this technique does not ensure an objectively precise evaluation of the sampled results. As it is possible to determine the probability of choice of any element in particular for inclusion in the sample, the estimates that were collected cannot be statistically projected to the whole population.

Another limitation concerns the people chosen for the sample. The choice of the seventeen to twenty-five age group, despite representing an important segment of the market, is restricted when it comes to considering cell phone users in Brazil. The choice of university students may not be totally representative of the population because they have more access to information and most of them are nearer the top of the socio-economic pyramid.

This study may serve as a basis for other studies. For example, it could be replicated with a different sample of people in order to make comparisons with the results obtained here. Another possibility would be to use a probabilistic sampling technique, which would allow generalizations of the results obtained. This sample could include all age groups and comparisons could be made.

On the same note, the services offered by cell phone providers could be included in a later study in order to include innovations in services. Another relevant application is replication of this study using other hi-tech products such as digital cameras, DVD recorders, PDAs, mp3 and mp4 players, etc.

The variable Innovativeness could be approached as a way of establishing in which category of products or interest the respondent could be considered an innovator in order to verify the claims of Summers (1971); Midgley (1977); Gatignon and Robertson (1985) and Schifman and Kanuk (2000), that it is not prudent to state that consumers who are innovative in one category tend to be innovative in other categories.

It would also be interesting to investigate other variables that were not used in this study. For example, the involvement of the consumer with the product under study (see Fonseca & Rossi, 1999), the risk perception and the emotional trade-off difficulty (see Luce, Payne & Bettman, 1999; Gatignon & Robertson, 1991) and his attitude towards technology (see Parasuraman, 2002). It would also be relevant the implementation of other analysis techniques in future studies, such as conjoint analysis, aiming to better analyze the consumers perception on the product’s complexity during the choice process.

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Consumer Decision Making in a Counterfeit-Plentiful Market: an Exploratory Study in the Brazilian Context
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Delane Botelho, EBAPE-FGV Brazil
Alda Rosana D. de Almeida, FEA-USP, Brazil

ABSTRACT
This study investigates attributes, and their relative importance, that influence consumer’s decision to buy counterfeits. We applied the revised search model as a theoretical basis, and conjoint analysis to establish the utilities of the attributes. Results revealed that the intangible attribute “product appearance” represents the highest utility for the two groups: regular consumers of counterfeit and of original products. However, different levels of preferences were observed between groups for the less relevant attributes, suggesting avenues for future research in Latin America.

INTRODUCTION
Counterfeiting has become an economic problem and a marketing concern of international importance, and has led to a variety of countermeasures based on legal, political, administrative, or business techniques. For the purpose of this paper, counterfeiting is defined to mean that an original product with a remarkable brand value worth copying already exists on the market. Its characteristics are copied into another product, which is indistinguishable from the original, and is sold at a lower price as if it were the original (Eisend and Schuchert-Güler 2007).

In 2007 the world market of counterfeit goods had a turnover of US$ 350 billion, approximately 6% of total world trade (International Chamber of Commerce 2007). Moreover a wide variety of counterfeit goods is equal to the market of original goods in many product categories (Feki, 2003). In Brazil, this market is also soaring (17% from 2005 to 2006, with a 45% growth in the category of clothing and trainers, according to IBOPE 2006), with easy to access goods sold partly due to poor state control (Duarte and Sallum 2003). A study performed by the Rio de Janeiro State Federation of Industries (Braga e Castro 2006) states that 93.8% of the young from middle classes in the state has already bought counterfeit goods and was aware that the merchandise was illegal. In 2006, 42% of the Brazilian population had already consumed counterfeit goods (Teixeira 2006).

Such characteristics configure the Brazilian market as a “counterfeit-plentiful market”, a situation described by Gentry, Putrevu, Schultz and Commuri (2001), in which abundant supply of and easy access to counterfeits can make the counterfeit consumer give many different justifications for their consumption. In this situation, a consumer may justify his or her choice by the lower price (Bloch, Bush and Campbell 1993) while another may specify it as a question of taste and appearance, justifying the choice by subjectivity (Gentry, Putrevu and Shultz 2006). There is the justified choice in the trade-off quality versus price, in which counterfeit is regarded as a product that offers “more for less”.

The justified choices are a way of: i) minimizing the risks of being unaware of being deceived; ii) pre-testing the purchase of the original product; and iii) experimenting the latest fashion at a lower price. There is also the choice based on two combined justifications: the growing acceptance of consumption and modification of the assessment criteria of such goods, which makes counterfeit consumption a socially acceptable and, in some cases, “guilty free” practice (Gentry et al 2001).

Based on the assumption that counterfeit consumption occurs beyond the monetary benefit offered (Bloch et al 1993, Gentry et al 2001, Eisend and Schuchert-Güler 2007), this article specifically aims to investigate what is the relevance of the supply attributes that influence the decision making of the counterfeit consumer in comparison to the consumer of original products (hereinafter called traditional consumer), in a category of products plentiful with counterfeits: sports footwear (trainers).

The article is structured as follows: this introduction presented the topic and the objective. Next is presented the theoretical background and methodological procedures. Lastly, the results and final remarks are given with the implications and suggestions for future research, in the light of consumer behavior theory.

THEORY
Products are not consumed just because of their functional characteristics but also because they have meanings and symbolize the consumer’s associations and perceptions about their subjectivity (Goodman and Cohen 2004). Consumer decisions are not dissociated from cultural questions and the meanings of the products and creation of significance consolidated by consumer processes can help consumers to structure their reality (McCracken 2003). Symbolic values and meanings are important for consumers not only because they help retain their former sense, but also because they help them to be categorized in society, communicate cultural meanings, traditions and group identity, as well as to shape and communicate their identity through the meanings attributed to their possessions (Belk 1998).

However, the prevailing outlook about consumption is based on the economic questions in which the consumer presumably acts out of utilitarian values, solving consumer problems rationally and analytically (Douglas and Isherwood 2004). But explanations on consumption based only on utility do not valorize the role of consumer experiences, ignoring the facets of their behavior relating to fantasy and emotional multi-sensorial aspects arising from their experience (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982).

If, on one hand, when making a choice based on experience, the consumer tends to emphasize his emotional aspects because his choice is based on subjective benefits; on the other hand, these same emotional aspects may affect his choice between similar alternatives in terms of utility (Havlena and Holbrook 1986). This is what happens in activities such as dressing and eating, where there is significant involvement of hedonist, symbolic and subjective values, even if tangible benefits are generated (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982).

Consumer makes her or his choices based on both hedonist and utilitarian values, since emotion and cognition are present in her/his hedonist behavior (Havlena and Holbrook 1986). So, consideration of more subjective and personal consumer values helps enrich the analysis of consumer decisions, and see the experimental nature of product consumption that can provide various intangible benefits for the consumer. Tangible and intangible values may act equally as variables to measure the consumer decision (Blackwell, Miniard and Engel 2001).

When seeking to understand consumer perception of the risk in illegally acquiring counterfeits, Chakraborty, Allred and Bristol (1996) discovered that the choice was made consciously, in which the counterfeit product was identified by the consumer in terms of

price, quality and retailer. Therefore, with a supply of counterfeits and ability to distinguish between these products and the originals, many consumers have had no problem with social acceptance, which contributes to boosting this market.

Counterfeit Consumption in Context

The reason a consumer first buys a counterfeit product may seem only economic, that is, the benefit of a lower price (Cordell, Wongtada and Kieschnick 1996). Therefore, a plausible premise would be that lower-income consumers would tend to consume more counterfeit products than those in higher income brackets, all things being equal. However, the results of studies by Bloch et al. (1993) show that many consumers in a developed country and with a high purchasing power prefer to choose counterfeits, which indicates the existence of other determining factors or attributes in the counterfeit decision making.

In Brazil, economic reasons are closely associated with counterfeit goods (Duarte and Sallum 2003; IBOPE 2006), but two market surveys indicated determining factors other than the economic for such consumption: in the first, the most attractive factor for counterfeit consumption is easy access to the goods; essentially sold by street vendors in different sizes of towns (Teixeira 2006); the second study made by the University of São Paulo found that the higher the consumer’s income, the greater his counterfeit consumption (Rehder 2007).

Not only does the volume and variety of counterfeits increase, but their manufacturing technology also develops (Feki 2003). Accordingly, various counterfeiting levels (levels of quality and similarity to the original product) are available in the market, which facilitates consumer assessment of cost-benefit (Gentry et al. 2001). In this situation, tangible attributes of the product (such as quality) interact with intangible attributes (such as the brand), namely, the consumer may seek the benefit of the brand by accepting to agree to tangible attributes of the chosen product.

A large part of the reason for counterfeit consumption lies in the symbolic value of the brand, although at different levels (Penz and Stöttinger 2005) which is why the choice will always directly or indirectly involve a brand decision (Gentry et al. 2001). Nevertheless, counterfeits whose brands represent a large part of which is copied, such as in the case of the attribute “design” (e.g., clothing and accessories, such as handbags), are assessed by the consumer also for intangible attributes, such as quality and similarity to the original (Prendergast, Chuen and Phau 2002). According Hoe et al. (2003) this occurs because these items are closely related to the consumer’s self-image and identity, as in an original product. Therefore, the consumer considers more personal and subjective values in choosing this product and is capable of transferring part of the meanings of the original product to her/his self and building her/his identity if the counterfeit is “very similar” (Hoe et al 2003).

In Brazil, Matsos, Ituassu and Rossi (2007) found that counterfeit buying also gives pleasure, in the case, for example, of having the experience of using an “almost-original” product, but with the advantage of paying a fairer price. Strehla, Vasconcelos and Huertas (2006) found that counterfeit consumption may justify its different use: differentiation for whoever publicly accepts the use of counterfeits, and social acceptance for whoever chooses its disguised use, indicating the “symbolic” nature of counterfeit consumption.

Because it is illegal, it could be presumed that counterfeit consumers are at least aware of the implications of their acts. However, most do not demonstrate such concern (Feki 2003), the Brazilians included (Rehder 2007). And the few who are aware preferred counterfeit products since they believed that they are an attractive option (Bloch et al 1993). Such consumer acts in a

Consumer Behavior and Revised Search Model

The area of consumer behavior has long attempted to increase the understanding of the consumer search in the decision making (Ratchford 2001). In the traditional model of search, the consumer decision making is addressed as a two-step process: (i) choosing the product and determining the favorite brand by some assessment and comparative process, (ii) looking for the lowest price of the product and chosen brand, and opting for the place that offers the best cost-benefit ratio, although the order of these two steps is uncertain in the buying process (Bloch, Sherrell and Ridgway 1987). Nevertheless, this viewpoint is based on the assessment stage for buying alternatives, ignoring the next stage when consumer choices are made (Ratchford 2001), in addition to ignoring the consumer search without previously determining the buying objectives (Bloch et al 1987). The typical search model, therefore, produces few insights for understanding the consumer decision to buy counterfeit products.

According to Gentry et al. (2001), in a market where there are few counterfeits, once the consumer decides to buy a product, her/his search will be restricted to the brand, assessing quality and price, as the typical search model predicts. But in a market “plentiful” of counterfeits, the consumer can look for a counterfeit product “with brand”, instead of the original “brand” product. Therefore, the consumer will first make a product decision and then decide on a brand. And after deciding on a product and brand, he or she may probably take the search process a little further, considering not only original products but also counterfeits at their different levels when deciding to buy (Gentry et al 2001).

This behavior, that Gentry et al. (2001) called revised search model, as shown in Figure 1, is justified in the consumer’s need to find extra tips on the product’s more tangible attributes to be able to distinguish them. This happens because of the need to evaluate something other than the price and retailer characteristics when making such a distinction.

The model in figure 1 is based on the consumer revised search framework present at Bloch et al (1987). This concept of continuous search may be applied to consumer search of originals and counterfeits because it considers successive search for information without previously determining buying objectives, for example, at moments of leisure or pleasure, when many intangible values are revealing (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982) or when searching for information contained in the original product that later will be useful in a future decision for the counterfeits one (Gentry et al 2001). Therefore, successive search for information about the product may help to explain consumer behavior beyond utilitarian questions.

Decision Making and Counterfeits

A study to investigate the consumer decision making, including counterfeit consumers, must adopt as an object of study a product that can reveal both subjective (symbolic) and objective (functional) (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). Trainers are a growing product category in the market, in which a wide variety of
models is consumed by a diversified public, for a wide range of purposes. The companies, in turn, operate in tough market competition and display world-class brands (Belk et al. 2005). Like other items of sportswear and accessories, the trainer product can show a wide range of consumer values, which makes it possible for the consumer to be socially and economically distinguished and build his or her identity (Belk, 1998; McCracken, 2003; Goodman and Cohen 2004).

Foreign brand trainers are the desire of many Brazilians, and they are sold all over the country in its original version as well as counterfeits at different levels (IBOPE 2006). According to Instituto Danneann Siemsen (2005) trainers are the product that are most counterfeited on the home market (44%), followed by clothing (21%) and toys (20%). And it is at the top of the list of the best-selling counterfeits (15%), followed by wristwatches (14%), eyeglasses (12%), handbags (5%) and pens (5%).

Trainers were chosen as an object of study herein because (a) they consumed irrespective of age, gender or social class; (b) a single model and brand may be directed to a large number of consumers; (c) there is abundant supply in the market with various counterfeit levels; and (d) it is a product that can reveal different consumer values, since it is naturally useful (objective value) as a sports product, and can at least partly reveal intrinsic symbolic values being able, for example, to build identity when “very similar” to the original.

The term counterfeiting is used in the literature in a broader sense referring to a wide range of products that could be either referred to as counterfeited or pirated (Eisend and Schuchert-Güler 2007). But, Paradise (1999) claims that copyrights and patents can only be pirated, whereas trademarks can only be counterfeited (e.g., pirated CDs and software and counterfeited luxury goods).

Gentry et al (2001) proposed a counterfeiting concept in which the difference between the original product and counterfeits is a continuum, ranging from the original product (on the left), through outlet products, smuggled original products, imitations (a copy of the product but without using the original brand), to the counterfeit product (on the right). On the extreme right there is: (i) the sophisticated counterfeit, which the consumer regards as better quality and/or almost impossible to distinguish from the original and (ii) the modest counterfeit, considered poorer quality by the consumer and/or easier to distinguish, being much inferior to the original. In the study herein the original/counterfeit continuum will be adopted, considering the ends only: the original item and two counterfeit levels (the sophisticated and modest).

METHOD

The study was done in two stages: qualitative and quantitative. The objective of the first is to choose the trainer model and brand and identify the main attributes related to the product (the place where the product is bought may also be an attribute). The quantitative stage of data collection consisted of a survey with trainer users, comparing the counterfeit consumer with the traditional consumer.

The main traits of the local consumer profile were first identified during the exploratory stage of the study. According to Santos and Alvarez (2005), Brazilian consumers have a "global collectivist" profile because they are very willing to consume international brands, where they have most affinity to the world-class brands of McDonald’s, Coca-Cola and Nike. Therefore, the idea was to identify a trainer whose model and brand would satisfy this profile, and its supply was not only in the original product but also at least two counterfeit types, the sophisticated and modest.

Articles published in the general media about the consumer phenomenon of counterfeit products in Brazil were used as a basis for highlighting the main models according to consumer preference (Duarte and Sallum, 2003; Braga and Castro, 2005). Next, internet
communities were investigated on a specific relationship website, in which one of the many world-class brands and models on sale in the country was outstanding. The trainer model and brand chosen for the study was the center of discussion in 58% of the 82 communities that stated that they wore, possessed, loved and even specifically collected this product brand and model. The focus of this research on a specific type of trainers and brand can also be justified by the adoption of the revised search model (figure 1) suggested by Gentry et al (2001). Later, this choice was confirmed during in-depth interviews.

These interviews were performed to understand in depth whether the attributes of the counterfeit products surveyed in a theoretical reference do in fact influence the consumer’s decision to buy trainers in the Brazilian context. In order to confirm these, or also indicate other relevant attributes, in-depth interviews with seven counterfeit trainer purchasers were recorded, transcribed and analyzed individually by the researchers (Malhotra 2006). The initially prepared interview protocol was enriched during two following interviews, acting as a test to identify and eliminate the problems in subsequent interviews (Louviere 1998).

Prime Attributes
The decision to buy counterfeits is based on the quality versus price trade-off. Quality would mean no defects, but here the quality in counterfeits is determined first by the outer aspect of the product, followed by evaluating the quality of the material used in its manufacture, always comparing it to the original product (Gentry et al 2001). In the case of clothing and accessory items the quality of the material is associated with time of use, and the consumer assesses the product by its wear with use (Gentry et al 2001). So, the quality of the material in the interviews was explored cautiously to prevent mistaken understanding, because the time taken for the material to wear with use cannot be measured technically by the consumer at the retailer and may be described in other words, such as wear and tear. In the interviews it was found that the respondents used the term durability when comparing the counterfeit product with the original. Other terms were practically not mentioned, and even when asked directly about the product’s wear and tear, the question was apparently not relevant to them. Therefore, durability was the first attribute to be defined.

The second attribute identified, product appearance, addresses similarity between counterfeit and original products. According to McCracken (2003) through fashion and mass communication values are transferred for goods and then from goods to consumer throughout consumption rituals where meanings can be revealed. In addition, these meanings can be physically represented by product “images” (Douglas and Isherwood, 2004). As the use of graphical representation of a product in conjoint analysis may help revealing the values addressed by the product, it was decided to use actual photos of products representing each one of the three levels: original product, sophisticated and modest counterfeits.

According to Snelders, Schoormans and Bont (1993) the intangible values to be revealed through pictures may improve the method’s predictive power. Moreover, the use of visual stimuli exposes the consumer to a decision making situation close to that found in the actual market (Green, Krieger and Wind 2001). The first two attributes defined represent the quality of each product comprising the structured questionnaire, enabling the respondent to make the quality versus price trade-off (Gentry et al 2001) in his decision making process.

The third attribute to be defined was the price, an important attribute that can influence consumer values, and is perceived as a multi-dimensional stimulus that can positively or negatively affect the decision making process (Blackwell et al 2001). The fourth attribute was the retailer, as many consumers use the retailer to assess product’s authenticity and quality, seeking more value for money (Gentry et al 2001).

In every interview, respondents gave detailed descriptions about similarities between counterfeit and original products, showing their awareness about prices charged for both and managed to clearly point out the differences between official and counterfeit retailers.

Conjoint Analysis
The revised search model was taken as the basis for outlining the process by which the consumer takes the decision making. The conjoint analysis was the method of analyzing the data collected in the survey, through its capacity to simulate options of choice, especially in the cases where the decision making may vary between two or more attributes of the product on sale (Green et al 2001). In the case of counterfeit products the conjoint analysis is appropriate, since the consumer not only must evaluate an attribute at the different counterfeit levels, but also needs to consider the same attribute in the original product. Adopting this method is also justified because it is a technique that can measure trade-offs in the consumer’s answers with regard to his or her preferences and buying intentions, and also simulating his or her reaction to the changes in existing products and new products introduced in some already existing segment in the market (Green et al 2001).

Since the conjoint analysis allows us to establish value functions that describe the degree of usefulness associated with the levels of each attribute, it is possible to assess which attributes most influence the consumer’s decision making, and may identify which represents more utility for the consumer (Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black 1998).

In the conjoint analysis, utility associated with the relative importance that consumers give to the attributes is done as follows: the respondents are shown stimuli consisting of combinations of attribute levels, and their answers are calculated based on the following premises: (i) the product may be defined in terms of some important attributes; (ii) the respondent takes the decision on an offer based on the assessment of attributes, namely, he or she implicitly decides which attributes are more or less important. The utilities are measured by the importance of each attribute resulting in the overall preference of the product (Green and Srinivasan 1999).

The analysis of all possible offers based on the combination between every attribute provides the value functions that describe the degree of usefulness associated with each attribute. The levels of the four attributes were (1) durability: two levels—high and low durability; (2) product appearance: three levels—original product, sophisticated and modest counterfeit; (3) price: three levels—R$80.00; R$200.00; R$500.00; (4) retailer: three levels—shopping center, counterfeit flea market, and street vendors.

The offers were prepared by randomly combining each of the four attributes and their value levels, which created 54 offers with different profiles. After orthogonal reduction, the respondent was given a sub-set with nine combined offers, presented in Table 1.

The structured questionnaire, pre-tested with 25 respondents, was divided into three parts. The first included a filler question when the respondent would state whether he or she has or does not have counterfeit trainers. This question helped separate the respondents in the two proposed groups: counterfeit consumers and traditional consumers. The second part presented the nine offers, each on a seven-point Likert scale, and the final part presented questions referring to demographic data.

The questionnaire was published on a homepage and disseminated to university students in the states of Rio de Janeiro and São
presented herein below.

Paulo, with 105 valid answers. A hardcopy version had a return of 60 valid questionnaires. An invitation was also sent to the participants of the communities relating to trainer consumption in a specific relationship internet website, resulting in 170 valid answers. Sixty-three of the communities returning, 335 of which were valid. The results of the study are presented herein below.

RESULTS

The main points in the study herein are: (i) its investigation based on more subjective values (such as price) and subjective values (product appearance), exploring the complexity of the phenomenon; (ii) adopting a technique (conjoint analysis) that can deduce the impact of the competitive market context in different products (original and counterfeit), evaluating the relevance of the product’s attributes through the respondent’s choice, and not by its direct hierarchization; (iv) by doing so based on little explored social context, such as the Brazilian and Latin American, with implications for the area of consumer behavior in this region.

This result may indicate that counterfeit consumption occurs beyond the questions of price or other objective values, since if the purpose of buying is merely economical, the consumer could choose an imitation (copy without using the brand). And if the purpose of consumption is the objective value, such as practicing sports, the consumer could choose a national brand with the same performance. Therefore, preference for the product appearance attribute may show more valorization of intangible attributes in both groups by aiming at subjective consumer values. The position of the durability attribute, third placed in both groups, reiterates the idea of a decision making based on the symbolic value of the product.

The results also indicate that the price is an attribute that distinguishes the decision process in both samples: the counterfeit consumer does not seem ready to pay dearly for the original product, not because of a lack of purchasing power (the groups do not differ significantly in terms of income, at 0.05%), but probably because they evaluate that the extra difference paid for the original does not justify the similarity of intangible values offered by the counterfeits. And the traditional consumer can find in the high price charged a second guarantee of its authenticity.

FINAL REMARKS

The fact that the product appearance attribute represents most usefulness in the choice for both groups may indicate the need for cautious assessment of the products on sale in the market as to how consumers make their choices. In this case, the counterfeit consumer must guarantee a decision making at the expected product level (sophisticated or modest) and the traditional consumer must guarantee the purchase of the original.

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TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offer</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Product Appearance</th>
<th>Durability</th>
<th>Retailer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>R$ 200.00</td>
<td>Sophisticated counterfeit</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Counterfeit flea market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>R$ 80.00</td>
<td>Original product</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Counterfeit flea market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>R$ 200.00</td>
<td>Original product</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Street vendor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>R$ 200.00</td>
<td>Modest counterfeit</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Shopping center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>R$ 500.00</td>
<td>Original product</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Shopping center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>R$ 500.00</td>
<td>Sophisticated counterfeit</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Street vendor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>R$ 500.00</td>
<td>Modest counterfeit</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Counterfeit flea market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>R$ 80.00</td>
<td>Sophisticated counterfeit</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Shopping center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>R$ 80.00</td>
<td>Modest counterfeit</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Street vendor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
symbolizes for the consumer: its significance, associations and perceptions on its subjectivity. This may indicate that the Brazilian consumer, irrespective of the product’s originality, can make his or her choice, for example, in order to be categorized in society, or convey cultural meanings and even shape and convey his or her identity. However, from the second level of priorities different preference levels were found between the groups, suggesting that the large supply of counterfeits in Brazil can alter the consumer search behavior in the market, which, perhaps arises from the need to accept consumer choices.

This study may produce insights for future studies in a Latin American context in that the symbolic consumer questions are more important to these consumers than the type of product chosen. In this situation, the forms of interaction between consumer and consumed products may influence their decision making, suggesting that the traditional consumer seeks to guarantee the originality of the desired meanings, in terms of authenticity (integrity of values) and not only the originality of the product in terms of its origin. On the other hand, the counterfeit consumer has perhaps abdicated the originality of the product—whether integrity, origin or both—not because (s)he ignores its tangible qualities in exchange for monetary benefits, but because (s)he benefits from the experiences of the product’s use. After all for its consumer a counterfeit product is just as real as it seems to be. Further research on the interactions of these phenomena and their implications are necessary in the context of Latin American consumer behavior.

The study presents limitations that may be overcome in future research, such as the sample for convenience that does not permit any generalization for any definable population, the inaccuracy of the method in measuring or distinguishing to what extent the consumer gives more value to the product or the brand, and the restriction of the study to a single product and brand. The next step would be to compare groups, as was done herein, but in more diverse cultural contexts, such as comparing the phenomenon in two or more Latin American countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>GROUP 1 Counterfeit Consumers</th>
<th>GROUP 2 Traditional Consumers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Importance</td>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Usefulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Product appearance</strong></td>
<td><strong>38.50%</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original product</td>
<td>0.9603</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophisticated counterfeit</td>
<td>-0.2659</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modest counterfeit</td>
<td>-0.6944</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Price</strong></td>
<td><strong>23.96%</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R$ 500.00</td>
<td>0.5149</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R$ 200.00</td>
<td>1.0298</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R$ 80.00</td>
<td>1.5446</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B = 0.5149</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Retailer</strong></td>
<td><strong>17.87%</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping center</td>
<td>0.2996</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counterfeit flea market</td>
<td>0.1687</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street vendor</td>
<td>-0.4683</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Durability</strong></td>
<td><strong>19.67%</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>-0.8452</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>-1.6905</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>B = -0.8452</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 2**

**RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF ATTRIBUTES FOR TWO SAMPLES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>GROUP 1 Counterfeit Consumers</th>
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Why Qualitative Researchers Squint: A Micro Analysis of the Temporal Aspects for Grocery Shopping
Daniela Spanjaard, University of Western Sydney, Australia
Lynne Freeman, University of Technology, Sydney Australia

ABSTRACT
This paper discusses the rewards for the researchers when they adopted a multidimensional approach, incorporating temporal aspects, to the analysis of emotion factors for in-store shopping behavior. Of particular interest was the role these emotions play in brand selection. Whilst emotional research is not unique, little has been done to understand it from an internally consumer-driven perspective for grocery brands. We used videography to capture the behavior. As a result of our findings, it is proposed that the temporal affect becomes the moderating variable in developing emotive bonds between the consumer and the brand whilst making in-store decisions.

INTRODUCTION
This paper discusses how the implementation of ethnographic techniques reveals consumers unconsciously using emotions to make conscious decisions about brands within the supermarket. This research demonstrates that the longer the time taken to make such a choice, the greater the revelation of emotional displays. We propose that the temporal affect becomes the moderating variable in developing emotive bonds between the consumer and the brand whilst making in-store decisions.

It is still assumed that, based upon the amount of information available to the consumer, attitudes tend to direct intentions towards behavior (Bettman, 1979, Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). Certainly, in situations where there are higher financial and personal risks this is most likely to be the case, however does this also apply for those environs where these risks are lower, such as fast moving consumer goods (FMCG)? Does the wide variety of available products outweigh a consumers’ need for undertaking rational and affective behavior?

With the number of grocery products in the Australian supermarket heading towards twenty thousand per store (Lee, 2004), it is suggested that even relatively simple decisions have now become more challenging processes for the consumer (Nelson, 2001). To such an extent that too much choice causes consumers to rely more on their internal reference sources such as emotion, trust, memory and familiarity. These then become a key factor of brand differentiation rather than the superficial prompts of price, and perceived quality. If this is the case, then there are implications even for FMCG. It is important to understand the interactions consumers have with their repertoire of brands rather than just monitoring purchase-repeat purchase cycles (Rundle-Thiele, 2006).

It is acknowledged that the role of the intangible aspects of consumer decision-making within the marketing context has been extensively researched. Both from a purely theoretical perspective (Bagozzi, Nyer, Gopinath, 1999), to specific case studies concerning ‘high’ involvement categories such as cars (Mowen, 1988), furniture (Roy & Tai, 2003) through to physical store surroundings (Donovan & Rossiter, et al 1992, Sherman, Mathur, Smith, 1997, Hansen, 2002, Sweeney & Wyber, 2002). However little in this area has examined the relationship between the intangible and the consumers’ in-store supermarket brand choices.

Our research challenges the notion many decisions are of an automatic and habitual nature. Past research suggests that consumers tend to react ‘mindlessly’ to stimuli, a situation which could easily be adapted to the grocery environment and thus negate the need for any detail interrogation such as this (Loewenstein, 2001). Debate has resurfaced as to the influence of conscious decisions made by consumers (Simonson, 2005) in comparison to those instances where automated, unconscious processes dominate (Bargh, 2002, Dijksterhuis, Smith, van Baaren & Wigboldus, 2005). Whilst automated decisions are made, in many situations there is a degree of consciousness. What is not made obvious is the process influencing that decision (Chartrand, 2005). In other words, the decision maker is aware of the outcome of the choice, but they may not always be aware of what triggers that decision.

These ‘triggers’ could be the presence of a significant other (such as a child or partner), or environmental cues such as store atmospherics and store layout (Chartrand, 2005). If we recognize these triggers, what is it that makes the consumer conscious of their decision making process?

If this is taken into the context of the supermarket, it is argued that many choices made here are highly habitualized and the perception of a product will automatically stimulate an attitude (Dijksterhuis, Smith van Baaren & Wigboldus, 2005). Many of these automated responses are based on information gained at a prior purchase occasion or in response to the surrounding environment (Holbrook & Gardner, 1998). But they rarely, take into account the emotional aspects of the consumer at the point of decision. This is partly due to the challenges in the past of being able to accurately capture such data. However, with the increasing sophistication of technology, it is now possible to capture such information.

It is with this premise that this study uses videographic observations to capture naturalistic grocery shopping behavior. It is suggested that there is a causal inference that the time taken to make a choice reflects the saliency of the emotive memory of that selection, which in turn, sets the scene for future choices made.

METHODOLOGY: IMPLEMENTING AN OBSERVATIONAL TECHNIQUE.

Direct imagery of consumers is seen as a way to capture more detailed information about emotions, motivations, and underlying value systems which previously relied on more survey based methods. (Heisley & Levy, 1991, Heath, 1997, Belk & Kozinets, 2005). These topics can be difficult to articulate, however the visual images often reveal so-called ‘hidden’ meanings. The use of observational methods can uncover far more accurate measures of understanding in consumer behavior rather than relying just on recall surveys (Newman & Lockeman, 1975, Lee & Marshall, 1998). Observation studies for this research provide a way to gain insight into the meanings behind the behavior allowing the researcher to capture the actions of the informant, and the environment surrounding them (Deshpande, 1983). This is beyond the observatory role of the focus group setting where the artificial location dominates.

In this case, digital data capture was implemented as a way of increasing the accuracy and reliability of the results, whilst at the same time decreasing influence of the researchers’ subjective interpretation of the phenomenon. With a permanent record, the subject was repeatedly viewed by other researchers who offered a differing interpretation of the situation (Heath, 1997).

Subsequently a small hand held video camera was used to capture the data. It should be noted at this point, that unlike other research into this area, the data was all captured within a naturalistic...
environment as opposed to a stimulated or experimental situation. Prior permission to access specific supermarkets was gained in advance. The respondents were a cross section of demographics ranging from single person households to large family units, a younger age group (minimum 18 yrs) through to the older age group (in excess of 80yrs).

There were some questions about the influence of a video camera potentially distorting true behavior, but this was found not to be a significant factor in any of the recordings undertaken. It was felt that by offering a full explanation of the process, the informants were conscious of the methodology and their expected level of participation well before the event.

Prior to commencing the shopping trip, the respondents were aware of the general purpose of the research but told specifically it was with reference to the emotive aspects of grocery shopping. This was regarded as the best option because to introduce the concept of emotional inputs into a routine activity may encourage the respondent to ‘show emotion’ be that consciously or unconsciously. Instead, they were told that the purpose of the observation was to capture ‘real time’ shopping visits as a way of understanding how consumers select certain brands during a normal shopping trip. They were also informed that there would be no interaction with the researcher until after their shop had been completed.

The researcher also ensured that they were a comfortable distance from the informant so as not to feel intrusive to any ‘personal space’. After the informants’ initial self-consciousness, their attention quickly focused on fulfilling their shopping requirements rather than the presence of a camera. Even the children, after only a few moments of surveying the camera, became more interested in providing input to the selection of brands. The observation was carried out at the convenience of the informant and at a supermarket of their choice. This aimed to reduce the unnecessary influence of an artificial environment, and encouraged a comfort zone for the informant because their surroundings were familiar to them. To decrease any further bias that may occur through the presence of an observer, the informants provided up to six weeks of previous shopping receipts that could be used to confirm their normal brand repertoire.

Videoing began the moment the respondent entered the grocery aisle, as opposed to fresh food (fruit and vegetables, meat and seafood, delicatessen counter). The video camera was kept on for the entire shopping trip to capture the points at which the consumer undertook searching behavior, especially in relation to their surroundings at the time. Given that past research has suggested that consumer emotions can be influenced by in-store atmospheres (Donovan and Rossiter, 1982), it was important to consider the consumers’ movements prior to brand selection and just after. Videoing finished once the respondent began to make their way to checkout registers.

A central objective for this research was to ascertain the nature, depth and role of emotions in brand selection during grocery shopping. To assess this emotional content of brand choice, various theories of emotions were utilized to develop an emotion recognition framework (Plutchik, 1980, Frijda 1986). In addition, Blum (1998) identified there are six universal expressions of emotion—fear, sadness, disgust surprise and happiness—all of which can be easily identified across all ethnic races. This perspective is similar to that of Plutchik (1980) and Izard (1990) who believe that there are a small number of core emotions from which all other emotions are derived. It was these aspects, which were used as part of defining the analysis boundaries once the data had been collected.

We expected to be able to use the established emotion recognition criteria (Plutchik, 1980, Izard, 1990) but actually found that such existing models had limited application to this research. It was a case of using the boundaries of these which didn’t tell a complete story. There were other dimensions that could not be explained in the initial analysis. When we added the temporal aspect and body language into the analytic mix, a more complex and complete outcome emerged.

ANALYSIS BOUNDARIES: OBSERVATIONS OF CONSUMER IN-STORE BEHAVIOR

Each videotape was viewed multiple times by researchers other than those who captured the data. It was felt that providing different perspectives from different people about the same recording could provide further insight into the video images. On several occasions the researcher who captured the recording provided input relating to conversations with the respondent prior and after the recording, together with any other instances that might have occurred outside the camera frame (eg: the presence of other shoppers, store staff) and general situational feedback (eg: size and presence of promotional displays, product out of stocks). This was to aid in comprehension for those researchers who were not present at the time of video capture.

It is worth noting that where multiple researchers were used without prompting they tended to look at different cues, some immediately looked the face to demonstrate emotion, whereas others looked at the body language.

Using a second researcher to view the recordings aided in reducing bias by provision of interpretation without undue recall of the actual shop. Instead the recording would be their only source of analysis.

Both researcher viewers were asked to note the following aspects of the video:

1. The timing of each product selection from the point when the consumer undertook seeking behavior (monitored by their specific shopping the shelves)
2. The stance of the respondent during product selection
3. The number of products visually inspected versus how many products were actually picked up
4. If products were inspected, how long and what was inspected
5. Of those products that did undergo a physical inspection, how many products were returned to the shelf versus how many were put in the shopping trolley
6. The number of times an inspection was made (visual or physical) but no product was selected

The resulting video interrogation revealed that all informants exhibited a repeated pattern of behavior ranging from minimal displays of emotion through to obvious signs of consternation such as frowning, touching their face, wringing their hands, and hair tugging. Throughout all of these aspects, body attitude in terms of posture, hand gestures, head movements (Lee & Marshall, 1998) facial expression (ie: smiles, yawning, frowning, grimacing) and eye movements (Lee & Marshall, 1998 Reeve, 2005) were taken into consideration. These behavioral groupings were chosen because they tend to be non-culturally specific and are a common human response (Reeve, 2005).

TEMPORAL EFFECTS AS MODERATING VARIABLES

Brand selection episodes were defined as commencing when the respondent either slowed down or stopped at a certain aisle section of the supermarket, and their eyes were noticeably seeking out a product. The selection episode was considered completed once the respondent moved away from the section and began further

Latin American Advances in Consumer Research (Volume 2) / 125
The temporal effects of decision-making

![Diagram 1.0](image_url)

It should be noted that the model in Diagram 1.0 focuses on purely on the behavioral components on the study, however it provides a summary to indicate how emotions reveal themselves at the time of the actual shop. The differing displays of consciousness appeared to be influenced by both environmental cues (e.g., store price promotions, stock availability) and internal cues (e.g., facial expressions such as frowning, smiling) without a distinct bias towards either. Whilst internal decisions are an influence in brand choice, the environment in which the choice is made must also be taken into account (Engel, Kollat & Blackwell, 1968).

A consumer’s current emotional state will influence their decision-making process be that consciously or otherwise. These have already been identified by Sherman, Mathur and Smith (1997) who suggest that consumers with a positive emotional state will reduce their decision intricacy and have a shorter decision time than those who have a negative emotional state. The results of the videographic observations appear to confirm this status.

Prior work in this area (Donovan and Rossiter, 1982, Sherman, Mathur and Smith, 1997) did not focus specifically on the impact that conscious decisions have over brand choice in comparison to unconscious selections. The emphasis has been mostly on the external surrounds impacting the consumer’s emotional state and how marketers and retailers can manipulate these in order to increase the likelihood of a positive experience (e.g., in-store music, product selection, sales staff etc) rather than looking internally at how the consumer interacts with their brand repertoire from their perspective and not the marketers.

**LIMITATIONS**

It is important to note that this research was only one component of a larger study researching the role of emotions towards supermarket brands. The videographic component clearly showed how the temporal aspects of decision making manipulates the resulting emotive influence. However, this method alone did not reveal the reasons why such delays in decision occurred. This particular aspect was investigated in a subsequent stage of the study that is not covered here. For the purpose of this paper, the emphasis is on understanding the importance of time taken to make a decision which in turn, provides a starting point as to why consumers select specific brands.

**CONCLUSION**

This research has shown that consumers don’t have an all-purpose procedure to decide how they should behave. Rather they appear to perform a two stage process—the first being to determine what kind of condition they are in (e.g., access to their preferred brand or category, the influence of others), and then to embrace choice rules that are suitable for that situation (e.g., brand availability, pricing options). If the situation fulfils their norm expectation,
then their analysis of the situation will remain unchanged. It is only if their perception of the situation doesn’t live up to their expectations that conscious awareness increases. The consumer appears to resent most intrusions that cause disruption to the routine shopping trip. The scale of this disruption can be as small as an in-store repositioning of a brand but the consequences can be far reaching. The importance of the temporal aspect will impact not only the time taken to complete a routine shopping trip, but also has potential to alter emotive connectedness between the brand and the consumer.

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ABSTRACT

This study provides a deeper understanding of the deliberation behind women’s consumption of age-defying products and services. In-depth interviews were conducted with 20 middle-aged women. Findings suggest that women use age-defying products and services to attain hoped-for possible selves and prevent dreaded ones. These seem to be created by the media and women’s social contexts. The media and advertising seem to be emphasizing and creating youthful ideals for women, however how women react to these is likely to depend on the extent to which these standards are internalized and perceived as easily attainable.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary consumer culture views apparent bodily aging as problematic and offer marketized solutions to the problem (Coupland 2007). Within this culture where we are not allowed to age, bodies become commodities that can be preserved and altered by the hard work of their owners (Shilling 1993; Strasser 2003) and a great deal of consumption reflects the desire to control natural forces, particularly those resulting from the inevitable passage of time (Belk 1988). Age-defying practices are becoming increasingly normalized and regarded as natural requirement of successful aging. From the consumption of hair-coloring products, hair loss remedies, skin-care products, non-cosmetic surgical procedures, to cosmetic surgery, the desire to control the process of aging has been translated into a multi-million dollar industry (Thompson and Hirschman 1995).

The apparent salience of facial appearance in people’s thinking about aging should come as no surprise. Facial appearance has a particular significance in perceiving apparent bodily aging. It is regarded as central in revealing a person’s ‘true’ identity (Negrin 2000); a semiotic space for self-identification that is perceived to reflect qualities of social and sexual attraction especially amongst women (Coupland 2007). In light of the existing youth culture and beauty ideals, women perceive the appearance of facial wrinkles and other visible signs of skin aging as a threat to their self-identity, sense of social currency and self-esteem (Clarke 2002). In fact, a study of 24 women who underwent cosmetic surgery concluded that the steady growth of cosmetic surgery is a result of body discontent including undesired visible signs of aging, all of which seems to stem from the media idealization of women in western culture (Goodman 1996).

Standards of ageless models and actors set by media are unattainable and distant from the average person (Bloch and Richins 1992). However, the proliferation of anti-aging products and services and the development of medico-technical possibilities marketed to diminish signs of skin aging has made women increasingly believe that they can to a large extent, stem the signs of passage of time using an array of products and services ranging from moisturizing crèmes and facials to drastic procedures, such as surgery. Consequently, the market for anti-aging products and services has been growing rapidly for the past decade. Yet, no research has focused specifically on this type of consumption. Some interesting work has been done in the marketing literature about the body, and indicated that consumers are able to identify products, services and activities relevant to approaching hoped-for possible selves or avoiding feared possible selves (Morgan 1993; Patrick et al. 2002). Nine ethnographic interviews with men and women who had undergone or were considering cosmetic surgery also suggests that consumers are able to identify products, services and activities relevant to approaching hoped-for possible selves or avoiding feared possible selves (Morgan 1993; Patrick et al. 2002).

Previous research indicated that women’s possible selves mainly revolved around physical selves (33%) (e.g., wrinkled, young-looking, fat, in good shape) (e.g., Cross and Markus 1991) and indicated that consumers are able to identify products, services and activities relevant to approaching hoped-for possible selves or avoiding feared possible selves (Morgan 1993; Patrick et al. 2002). Nine ethnographic interviews with men and women who had undergone or were considering cosmetic surgery also suggests that approaching and avoiding hoped-for and feared positive possible selves motivate physical appearance enhancement (Schouten 1991).

So, where do these positive and negative possible selves originate from and what provides them with their motivational potency? According to the concept of possible selves, the repertoire of our possible selves develops from our past experiences, media, and social interactions (Markus and Nurius 1986). Media produces
a cultural system of beliefs that evokes a set of established meanings and social images women use for self-assessment (Hirschman and Thompson 1997). It provides aspirational models of possible ageless futures and promotes fear and insecurity about aging appearance (Belk 2001; Nabi 2002; Stevens and Maclaran 2005). A recent analysis of media texts such as magazines, television programs and advertisement as well as features on skin care products (Coupland 2007) revealed an emerging media discourse that pressures women and even men to resist outward signs of aging-the problem-and assume responsibility to stay young-looking and defy the ugly age through the use of marketized solutions. Thus we expect that women’s hoped-for possible selves are created by the media such as young-looking celebrities in television shows and skin-care advertising models.

Consumer culture has also created stereotypes and stigmas associated with the word “old” and what has been called “the rejected body” (Wendell 1996). The rejected body partly refers to the bodily appearance that is feared and/or rejected because it represents deviations from a society’s cultural ideals of the body (Morell 2003). Thus we explore the role that media and the social context are playing in creating both desired and undesired standards to be approached or avoided.

DATA COLLECTION

In-depth interviews were conducted with 20 women ranging in age from 40 to 60. A relatively narrow age range was chosen to permit meaningful analysis. Participants were intentionally sampled for the specific perspectives they may have, in particular, those regarding age and concern with physical appearance generally. All interviewees were New Zealanders of Anglo-European descent. The informants had different social, educational and occupational backgrounds. The laddering technique (Pieters, Baumgartner and Allen 1995) was used to uncover the participant’s deep motives for dealing with their wrinkles and was facilitated by asking informants a series of “why is this important to you?” type of questions. Probing interviewing techniques were also used to gain insight into how women interpret and feel about visible signs of aging. Informants were interviewed in their homes or in other places where they felt comfortable. The purpose of the interview was described as an exploration of some aspects of women’s consumption behavior. Interviews took approximately one hour to complete. All were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim and a thematic analysis was conducted. The author and a graduate student trained in qualitative data analyses identified and coded themes separately. Differences were debated and lead each coder to re-read the transcripts to verify the themes discovered in the first iteration. The goal was not to find identical themes, but to comment on the plausibility of each other’s themes, thereby strengthening the interpretation (Malterud 2001) and ensuring trustworthiness (Wallendorf and Belk 1989).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings are discussed next in the light of existing literature. Although our interpretation is generated from a wealth of data, for the sake of parsimony a limited number of quotes are used here for illustrative purposes.

Possible selves and motives to deal with visible signs of skin aging

Participants’ expressed reasons for using moisturizing crèmes or other anti-aging products or services suggest that they were avoiding or approaching possible selves. For example, Pat (aged 42, married, accountant, has used anti-aging creams, Botox);

I don’t want to look very wrinkly when I grow older. When I think that I might look like my mother…I hate it, there is nothing wrong with my mother, you understand what I mean, but I hate looking old, I don’t want to become invisible…..Do we ever see old women presenting programs on TV or on the cover of magazines? And if yes, how many; maybe only to make fun of them. You know when you look old and walk in the street, men do not notice you. It is as if you no longer exist.

And Janette (aged 50, lives with a partner, secretary, has used anti-aging creams and chemical peels);

I always try to look younger, look my best really. It’s hard, we can’t change the fact that we are aging, but at least I can try to age gracefully, I mean look younger than my age, it is so flattering, isn’t it?

Becoming invisible in the dating and mating game appeared to be one of the most concerning dreaded possible selves that middle-aged women strive to avoid. This comes as no surprise in a culture that places so much emphasis on appearance and equates youthfulness with beauty and seduction and their loss with deficiencies in femininity and sexuality (Scrif 1994). Women’s preoccupation with appearance enhancement in general has long been linked to the idea of the male gaze and their primary concern with men’s appraisal (Coupland 2007). In this context, women’s prime concern becomes losing physical desirability and as a result becoming ‘invisible’. The invisibility defining aging seems to be reflected in the underrepresentation of older adults on television programs and their almost total exclusion from ads for glamorous merchandise such as fashion, cosmetics and leisure products (Lee, Carpenter and Meyers, 2007).

Although most informants appear to have both, hoped-for and feared possible selves, most of them appear to have either more salient feared possible selves (avoidance strivers) or hoped-for selves (approach strivers). In the language of Markus and Nurius (1986), the avoidance strivers are people whose working self-concepts are more frequently dominated by feared possible selves. On the other hand, the approach strivers are people whose working self-concepts are more frequently dominated by hoped-for selves (Markus and Wurf 1987).

A series of probing and laddering questions about why approaching or avoiding these possible selves is important identified two distinct classes of underpinning goals or motives. Approach strivers had more fulfillment type goals (e.g. enjoy life, achievement, self-esteem), while women who are avoidance strivers had more security type goals (e.g., prevent social disapproval, financial security, and secure long term relationships). For instance, throughout the interview, not wanting to look wrinkled and old were mentioned frequently by Mila (aged 41, married, receptionist, has used anti-wrinkle creams, facials and microdermabrasion) as reasons for dealing with skin aging. When first asked about the reasons why she is dealing with skin aging, a feared possible self was salient. She stated: “I don’t want to have a wrinkly and sagging skin in a few years. I would hate to look older than my age…” She then added in answer to a probing question: “I don’t know…because we don’t want people around to see how old we are”. As identified from the series of laddering questions, security goals, in particular, secure long-term relationships appear to underlie her concern with skin aging.

You feel more confident. Every woman cares about how she looks, not necessary to attract men, but I don’t know… It is
important for my family. I don’t want my grandchildren to be scared of my old look; I want them to be proud of me. And you know if I don’t look after myself, my husband might start looking outside. I’m sure he won’t, but he might. So it’s really to keep the family together...It makes life easier I think...bearable...at least you know you won’t be lonely when you’re old and you’ll find someone to bring you a glass of water if you cannot do it for yourself.

However, for Amanda (aged 53, separated, lecturer, has used anti-wrinkle creams and Botox), mostly positive standards to be approached were mentioned by her throughout the interview: “I just want to still look younger than my age and at least my age...” As identified from the series of laddering and probing questions fulfillment type of goals appears to underlie her concern with wrinkles too. When asked about why looking younger is important she explained:

Who doesn’t want to look young? By looking young I mean looking reasonably attractive, not necessarily seduce people around...I’m just doing it for me. I also don’t have any expectations in terms of career. So, it is purely to make me feel good, have the pleasure of having cheerful and outgoing people around me...When you feel good you attract nice cheerful people and then you do nice things together, and I guess that would make anyone happy, that’s how I personally enjoy myself.

According to the concept of possible selves, the repertoire of possible selves is developed from past experience and the social context. Where do these age-related possible selves come from and what role do media and the social context play in developing these desired and undesired possible selves and providing them with their motivational energy?

The role of social context in forming and enhancing desired and undesired possible selves

The role that society and especially media play in creating idealized youthful images and standards and increasing women’s concern with visible signs of aging clearly emerged from the data. Most participants regardless of whether they are ‘approach strivers’ or ‘avoidance strivers’, blamed the media and society for women’s obsession with youthfulness. They accuse media; in particular, TV and advertising for creating youthful idealized images, which are embodied by women. For instance, Diane (aged 52, has used anti-wrinkle creams and photofacials) said:

For some reason the images we see on TV, movies and magazines of the people out there and so called as being beautiful are young. I feel quite strongly about the media obsession with youth. I feel angry in a way about it...have you seen the makeover program 'ten years younger' last night on TV? Did you see how that woman looked after they injected Botox and dermal fillers in her face? How would you expect women not think of doing the same? We are pressured to try everything we can afford. Why a woman would want to look her age when it is possible to look younger. A friend of mine saves money to do those Botox injections every three months. I don’t blame her.

Jane (aged 49, has used anti-wrinkle creams) explained:

There is so much emphasis on it in the media. It is unfair that there is a lot of pressure on women in the media. You see many movie stars always looking youthful and trying to retain their beauty and attractiveness and those people in the make-over programs feeling transformed and they feel much better about themselves. I feel like everything in TV and media is about staying young. You cannot get jobs, achieve in life without being young. I feel older people are becoming invisible and they are desperately trying to look visible by doing Botox and surgery.

And Rose, 53-year-old used anti-wrinkle creams and Botox;

Beauty in our society is so much placed upon youthful appearance, and as a result no one wants to be perceived as old. It is an awful world, I have no choice but to present my self nicely, you don’t want people to perceive you as old...I believe if we lived in a country where no one would care about it and you were judged about intellect, you wouldn’t care about it... If no one worried about it, no one would have worried about looking old.

Marketers provoke women’s envy by showing young looking celebrities and models enjoying life as well as the admiration of others (Belk forthcoming). The advertising industry has resounded with its portrayals of young looking women as independent, healthy, sexy, attractive, admired, happy and fulfilled. Women compare themselves to transformed models. These represent their hoped-for or desired possible selves (Belk forthcoming). They develop a strong desire to possess youthful attributes that these models possess and which they lack, and think of the possible ways to become in turn enviable. Thanks to marketized solutions, in particular recent developments in rejuvenating technologized treatments, women are increasingly discouraged to put up with frustrating destructive feelings of envy, and rather assume the responsibility to stay young-looking or “turn back the clock”

In addition to young-looking celebrities, interviews revealed that some of the identified hoped-for possible selves are past younger selves participants hope to look like again and visualized images of their old-looking mothers or other family members regarded as negative role models appearance wise. For instance, Sandra (aged 60, has used anti-wrinkle creams, laser resurfacing and injectable fillers) noted:

The other day I felt bitterness when I looked at some of my pictures twenty years ago, and I wondered if I could ever look like that again. Of course, it is impossible no matter what I did... but when I saw my son’s mother-in-law after she had a facial surgery...she looked, I would say, ten years younger at least. So with all those advanced surgical procedures, I guess everything is possible.

Marylin (aged 43, married, real estate agent, has anti-wrinkle creams, rejuvenating facials) said:

The other day one of the family friends told me that I’m starting to look like my mother... and I have to admit I started thinking Oh I don’t want to look like aunty Joelle...she didn’t look after herself and she looks older than her age. And I’m sure she wouldn’t have if she did.

And Rose (aged 46, married, factory job, has used anti-wrinkle crèmes):

When I look at my mother’s lines and sagging skin and think that I might look like her in less than twenty years, I feel I need
to take my skin aging more seriously and do more than what I’m currently doing to prevent that. My mother never used a cream, not even a moisturizing cream, but she had a reasonably healthy lifestyle and never smoked, but that was not enough apparently.

It appears from interviews that the media play a significant role in forming youthful ideals for women, thus, are likely to activate positive standards or hoped for possible selves. However, these youthful attractive images are likely to be reflective of male desires projected upon women and that women adopt as their own to comply with society’s expectations (Schrift 1994). They are most probably coercive standards dictated by the social environment such as the media and social pressure. This makes us wonder whether these ideals of youthfulness are standards women intrinsically desire to attain, or rather are more of coercive standards that women feel they have to attain, and thus are more related to avoiding feared possible selves. Interestingly, women who appeared to be more motivated by hoped-for possible selves seem to be more accepting of the ideals created by the media than their counterparts who strongly criticised them. For instance, Amanda for whom desired possible selves were mentioned throughout the interview acknowledged the role the media and society play in creating pressure on women to look good and conserve their youth. But, did not criticise it and took it as a fact of life. When asked about where women’s concern with youth comes from she stated:

We are women, and we are expected to present ourselves nicely. It is a fact of life. It has been the case for thousands of years. We should be sexy and attractive to men. You see those actresses who are 10 years older than you looking 10 years younger and you wish you can become like them.

This finding is consistent with the internalization and integration processes argued for in the self-determination theory (Ryan et al. 1996). According to the authors’ contention, extrinsically motivated behaviours can become increasingly self-determined when the values underlying them become internalized by the individual. When these are accepted as personally important and meaningful, they become integrated within the core self. Deci and Ryan (1991) proposed that this tendency toward integration is promoted by the social context but is largely dependant on people’s nature and their fundamental psychological needs.

How women react to idealized images is also likely to depend on the outcome of a social comparison process. Comparison appears to be a basic human motive, and social comparison theory (Festinger 1954) can be applied to the notion that consumers compare themselves to models portrayed in ads (Richins 1991). Most social comparison theories assume that upward social comparison (comparing one’s self with a superior) causes dissatisfaction and feeling of inadequacy whereas downward social comparison (comparing one’s self with a worse-off) (Kemmelmeyer and Oyserman 2001). Since women compare their more ‘mediocre selves’ with those idealized for ever younger-looking models or celebrities ‘superiors’, one would expect that the outcome of the social comparison process might cause anxiety and result in the salience of feared possible selves to be avoided rather than ideal hoped-for selves to be attained especially if one perceives herself as far away from those ideals or doesn’t have high expectations of attaining them. However, a woman who perceives herself as relatively close to those ideals might find herself thinking of attaining them. Overall, it seems hard to draw a conclusion about whether contextual determinants cause one or the other possible self to motivate and guide behavior. Although media and advertising seem to be emphasizing youthful ideals for women, how women react to these is likely to depend on the extent these are internalized and perceived as easily attainable.

**Revising possible selves to better cope with failure**

Within the lifespan literature, a number of theories and findings imply that a recalibration of one’s possible selves may be a key to continued well-being and successful aging (Herzog and Markus 1999). That is, an important factor in adjustment to aging is the revision and reformulation of possible selves. This notion of possible self reformulation was used by some of the informants as an attempt to deal with ongoing disappointment with their inability to preserve their youthful looks. For instance, Jennifer, 58-year-old, not only lowered her goals by lowering her expectations but also, shifted her attention to hoped-for possible selves in domains other than physical appearance, in particular ‘the wise me’ and ‘the healthy me’.

I had been using “Clinique” products until last year and I had Botox three times in the last two years. You have no idea how much money I spent on creams and serums and you know that you have to re-inject Botox every three months. But I stopped all that when one morning I looked at myself and didn’t like what I saw...I can’t keep doing this all my life. We can always try but I think we cannot change the fact that we are aging. I think what women are trying to do is ridiculous. Life is not about appearance only. The main thing is to be healthy and happy with what you have achieved in life. We certainly lose beauty as we grow, but we gain in wisdom and experience. I like my job and I have wonderful grandchildren and nice and caring friends, what else do I want?

**CONCLUSION AND RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

The present study identified possible selves as motives to deal with skin aging and demonstrates the role of possible selves in motivating consumption. Through conceptualizing goals and ‘anti-goals’ in hoped-for and feared possible selves respectively, this research constitutes another step towards personalizing goals and emphasizing the role of the self-concept in motivating and guiding consumer goal-directed behavior.

This study also suggests that hoped-for and feared possible selves are created by the media and women’s social contexts. However, it seems hard to draw a conclusion about whether contextual determinants cause one or the other possible self to motivate and guide behavior. Although media and advertising seem to be emphasizing and creating youthful ideals for women, how women react to these is likely to depend on the extent to which these are internalized and perceived as easily attainable.

The preoccupation with preserving youthful bodies as influenced by the media has been mainly a female preoccupation (Sayre 1999) and in most cultures, physical signs of advanced age are more harshly judged in women than in men (Clarke 2002). However, in western cultures, the male body has been increasingly sexualized and displayed in media (e.g., cinema, TV and advertising) as an object for female appraising gaze (Coupland 2007). There is in fact a growing cultural expectation that men should attend to grooming and use products and services traditionally seen in the domain of female bodily grooming such as facial moisturizers (e.g., revitalizing creams Q10 for men) and Botox facial injections. A future possible direction for this research is to explore men’s concern with bodily aging and identify the most worrisome aspects of it as well as how these are culturally constructed and influenced by the media.

Bodies and standards of beauty are socially and culturally constructed and the cultural context influences how women interpret aging and what meanings they attribute to apparent youth loss. Culture also influences the emergence of possible selves in later life.
and how these are used and negotiated to protect one’s sense of self in the face of age-related physical challenges and changes (Frazier and Waid 2003). A future research focus that explores women’s concern with apparent bodily aging in different cultural contexts is likely to provide valuable insights into what role culture plays in constructing our hoped for and feared possible selves as we advance in age. It may also aid in identifying other perspectives on aging. For example, Nicole Sault (1994) notes that some cultures are less apt to view the body as an integral part of self. Just as our shadow is not regarded as self, we may be able to take a similar view of our bodies. This can be good or bad however. To the extent that the body we see to view the body as an integral part of self. Just as our shadow is not regarded as self, we may be able to take a similar view of our bodies.

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Effect of a Cause-Related Marketing Campaign in Printed Media, on Disposition to Help and Empathy

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ABSTRACT

Cause-related marketing has been the source of a great number of research. A research line has focused on external factors that influence donors’ behaviors. Notwithstanding, not much is known about the effect of the role played by the type of message and transmission means used on donor’s behavior. This work focuses on the relation existing between the type of message and the printed media vis-à-vis the desire to help and empathy. The results obtained in an experiment show that the rational messages in printed media significantly affect the intention to help and empathy.

INTRODUCTION

Cause-related marketing has had a great acceptance in the entrepreneurial world and, strategically, it has become an attractive activity for enterprises, since it generates value, increases brand equity and brand preference. Cause-related marketing is any commercial activity whereby a company establishes an alliance with a non profit organization in order to contribute with a specific amount to a particular cause or foundation, encouraging participation of purchaser, in order to obtain mutual benefits. (Hernández 2005; Polonsky and Mcdonald 2000; Ross III, Patterson and Stutts 1992; Varadarajan and Menon 1988). A great number of research on cause-related marketing has stemmed as a response to the growth of research as focused on external factors that influence donors’ behavior. Notwithstanding, not much is known on the role played by the type of message and the media used, with respect to donor’s behavior.

This project intends to determine the impact the role of the message, the communication media used, and the brand, have on consumer’s empathy and intention to help. It is considered that when social causes sponsored by existing brands in the market are communicated using only text (rational) in printed media, they generate more intention to help and empathy towards the cause. In order to achieve the proposed objective, one pilot study and one experiment were accomplished. The present paper is organized as follows: the first part presents the principal research conducted, and the hypothesis. Subsequently, the targets of the pilot study and the experiment are described. Finally, the results are analyzed and certain conclusions are presented.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on the role of cause-related marketing concerning consumer donor’s purchase decision has followed different trends or lines. The first line is made up by a series of reflections that explore evolution, meaning and applications of the cause-related marketing (Austin, Herrero and Reficco 2004; Hernández 2005; Polonsky and Mcdonald 2000; Varadarajan and Menon 1988). The second line of research assesses the impact that cause-related marketing has on the brand equity and image of the sponsoring companies (Polonsky and Mcdonald 2000). The third line researches the influence of cause related marketing on the behavior of the consumer as donor (Hernández 2005; Strhilevitz 1998). The fourth line of papers researches factors that promote altruist behavior in the donor (Barrett, Dunbar and Lycett 2002; Buss 2003; Batson 1999; Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce and Neuberg 1997; Dawkins 1989; Eisenberg 2002; Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin and Schroeder 2005). The works that look for the role of the type of message and communication media on donor’s behavior are found in this same trend (Bagozzi and Moore 1994; Wells, Burnett and Moriarty 2002). Although social marketing and corporate and consumer behavior as donor have been amply researched, nonetheless, not much is known on the role played by the type of message, the communication media, and the brand, concerning donor’s behavior. In addition, existing literature on this topic has not registered any research conducted with real brands and in different cultural contexts.

Literature considers that there are several factors that encourage human beings to adopt altruist behaviors. Among the most important factors, there are biological factors (Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin y Schroeder 2005) and psychological factors, such as emotions, affection and personality (Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce and Neuberg 1997; Eisenberg 2002; Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin and Schroeder 2005; Penner, Fritzschke, Craiger and Freifeld 1995). The reasons associated with volunteer activities constitute another factor (Omo and Snyder 1995; Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin and Schroeder, 2005; Piliavin 2004; Wilson and Musick 1997). A third factor is utilitarianism (Austin, Herrero and Reficco 2004; Porter and Kramer 2002). A fourth factor is social pressure (Hopper and McCarlnielsen 1991). Finally, persuasion exerted through the different media is another factor worthwhile mentioning (Pett, Cacioppo and Schumann 1983). This project concentrates on persuasion through printed media. Its main purpose is to see how messages on social causes executed through printed media influence behavior of donors.

The involvement concept has occupied an outstanding place in consumers’ literature (Traylor 1981). The different definitions that the specialists give to this concept reflect ambiguity, complexity and the equivocal nature thereof (Greenwald and Leavitt 1984; Lastovicka 1979; Park and Young 1983; Petty and Cacioppo, 1979; Zaichkowsky 1985; Andrews, Durvasula and Akhter 1990). The research on involvement has followed different paths. A group of researchers has focused mainly on the definition of the constructed domain, its dimensions, types and levels (Greenwald and Leavitt 1984; Krugman 1965; Laurent and Kapferer 1985; Petty and Cacioppo 1979; Zaichkowsky 1985). Another group of researchers has focused on involvement measuring (Laurent and Kapferer 1985; Krugman 1966; Ray 1978; Rogers and Schneider 1993; Zaichkowsky 1985; 1994; Andrews, Durvasula and Akhter 1990). The third group of researchers has engaged in studying the involvement role in cognitive structures attitudes (Lastovicka and Gardner 1978; Park and Young 1982; Petty and Cacioppo 1979) and their applications. With regard to this latter point, literature suggests that a consumer may be involved with the products (Clarke and Belk 1978), with the purchase decisions (Clarke and Belk 1978) and with advertisements (Bogart, Tolley, Orenstein 1970; Krugman 1965; 1970; 1971; Eagly and Manis 1966; Wright 1974; Zaichkowsky 1985).

Many of the roads followed by researchers in consumers’ behavior on TV advertisement and the involvement level were originated in the works published by Krugman (Greenwald and Leavitt 1984; Traylor 1981). Krugman (1965) directed his attention to the effect of the media on involvement, observing that TV advertisement brings forth low involvement. In his first publication
he established that involvement is the number of conscious “bridging experiences”, connections, or personal references per minute of the receiver. On the other hand, he adduces that the impact of advertising is limited. He suggests very different effects could be expected according to involvement level (Krugman 1965). In a subsequent writing he stated that advertisement involvement tends to be higher for magazines than for television with high involvement products, and there is no difference when dealing with low involvement products (Krugman 1966). In another publication he stated that persons passively process the information provided by massive media, such as television (Krugman 1970). Finally, Krugman (1971) reported another study using brain waves and shows that the differences of the brain’s electric response are more related with the media than with the content. In this study, the investigated subject recorded a high proportional “fast waves” in response to magazine advertising, towards which the subject showed higher interest than towards TV advertising, on which his interest was not very clear. Notwithstanding, the results of such study are questionable due to the fact that in the research, the content differences between messages were not controlled (Wright 1974).

Other authors have confirmed TV’s limited impact (Bogart, Tolley, Orenstein 1970) and have evidenced that for certain products people establish or generate more connections in response to printed advertisement than in response to TV advertisement. They stated that printed execution provides a larger opportunity to give an active response than executions for radio and TV. It establishes that TV’s advertising impact is of low involvement when compared with high involvement of magazine advertising. They consider that the message transmitted through this high involvement media, involves consumer more in a cognitive activity than the same message transmitted in an audio or audiovisual media (Wright, 1974).

In one of their studies Petty, Cacioppo and Goldman (1981) found that to the extent the topic discussed in the message presents a level of personal relevance for whoever perceives it, it is more probable that the person who detects the message assesses it in a more rational manner. Other researchers argue that certain people have evidenced a trend to rely more on messages transmitted through printed media than through audiovisual media (Wells, Burnett and Moriarty 2002). Bagozzi and Moore (1994) argue that emotional campaigns produce stronger feelings, and generate a greater desire to help than rational campaigns.

Based on the above discussion, this experiment conducts a research on the influence exerted by the type of message executed at printed media and the brand, on the desire to help and empathy of consumer.

First of all, it is established that:

H1 rational messages executed in printed media concerning brands that compete in the same category and that are related with social causes generate greater intention to help than emotional messages of the same brands executed in printed media.

Secondly, it is sought to evidence that:

H2 rational messages executed in printed media concerning brands competing in the same category and that are related with social causes generate greater empathy than emotional messages of the same brands executed in printed media.

PILOT STUDY

In order to achieve the proposed objectives, a pilot study and an experiment were conducted. The pilot study was done with the following targets: 1) to determine the most relevant social cause and to establish the type of feelings associated with each one of them. 2) To identify the most remembered campaigns and the type of social cause associated with the campaign and 3) to select the product category and the real brands that have more affinity with the social cause, which would be used in the experiment.

A total of 78 students that are taking different undergraduate courses participated in the pilot study, which was accomplished in two stages. In the first stage, the most important social cause was established, together with the feelings associated therewith, and the social cause campaigns that the individuals remembered most. The second stage allowed to select the category and the brands that were used in the experiment.

First Stage. 42 undergraduate students registered at the administration, industrial design, industrial engineering and architecture curricula at Universidad de Los Andes, were selected. These subjects were asked to establish the importance of eight social causes in accordance with the measuring system proposed by Carpenter, Glazer and Nakamoto (1994). The subjects were presented the eight causes and were subsequently asked to order them, based on their importance. The subjects were to indicate first the least important cause, marking the left end of a line (ranging from 0 to 10 centimeters) and, subsequently, they were to indicate the most important cause, marking the right end of the line. The subject then placed a labeled mark for each of the six remaining causes, along the line, to indicate relative importance. The rating for each cause was the distance in centimeters from the least important brand (0 centimeters). The subjects also answered questions related with the feelings generated by the preferred causes, the social causes remembered, and the brand associated therewith.

The results show that the subjects perceived infant ill-treatment, humanitarian help to displaced people, and intra-family violence, as the most important causes. On the other hand, 67% of the subjects remembered social campaigns focused on children, such as the campaign of Fundación Cardio Infantil, or the Alliance Alkosto-Best Buddies. Finally, it was found that campaigns related with social causes are associated with positive feelings of happiness and satisfaction.

Second Stage. This stage was carried out in order to select the product category and the brands that would be used in the experiment. 36 students of different semesters and undergraduate programs of Universidad de los Andes participated. The subjects were presented eight products and then they were asked to select the option that had more affinity with infants’ ill-treatment social cause. Subsequently, they were asked to select the brand they considered more appropriate for the development of the campaign.

The results show that the greatest affinity was found among a diapers category with the infant ill-treatment social cause. In addition, the brands Huggies and Pequeñín had the greatest affinity with the infant ill-treatment social cause.

In summary, the infants’ ill-treatment social cause and the brands Huggies and Pequeñín in the diapers category were taken into account for the design of the experiment.

EXPERIMENT

Method. This work researches the relation existing between the rational or emotional nature of the message placed in printed media concerning three diaper brands, and donor’s empathy and desire to help. The experiment employed 2 (types of message: rational vs. emotional) x 3 (brands: Huggies, Pequeñín and Kid123) between subjects design. Huggies and Pequeñín are real brands that actually compete in the diapers market and 123 is an artificial brand that does not exist in the market.
Subjects. This experiment was conducted at Universidad de Los Andes to test Hypothesis 1 and 2. The first hypothesis affirms that rational messages executed in printed media, on diaper brands related with social causes generate greater empathy than emotional messages executed in printed media, concerning the same brands. The second hypothesis says that rational messages executed in printed media concerning diaper brands related with social causes generate greater intention to help than emotional messages executed in printed media concerning the same brands. One hundred eighty undergraduate students of the administration curricula participated in the study. Half of them were female students, and the group age ranged between 17 and 28. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of the six experimental treatments. In addition, within each condition, the presentation order of scales was counter-balanced across subjects.

Procedure. In order to assess the role of the brand associated with the social cause with regard to the empathy and the desire to help from the donor, three brands were selected. Huggies is leader in the Colombian market and it was the most remembered one in the pilot test. Pequeñín was the second most remembered brand of the pilot test. Kids 123 is a fictitious brand. Figure 1 summarizes the 2 x 3 factorial design used in the experiment. Two types of campaigns for printed media were designed, a rational one and an emotional one. The campaigns design was taken from the description of the campaigns used in the study developed by Bagozzi and Moore, using images with just a few text for the emotional campaign, and a lot of text without images for the rational campaign. The emotional type campaign was characterized by having an image that sought to awaken emotions and tenderness feelings. To achieve these feelings, a photograph of a sad girl was shown, with tears in her face, hugging a bear and just a few text. An emotional campaign associated with infants’ ill-treatment social cause was designed for each one of the brands (Huggies, Pequeñín and Kids 123). The emotional campaign used was the same one; the only thing that changed was the sponsoring brand. The rational campaign only had text (no image) and sought to call the attention of the subjects using real and alarming data on Colombian children. It included real data on the infant ill-treatment situation provided by UNICEF, the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF), and the International Organization for Migration in Colombia (OIM) and articles of opinion on infant ill-treatment in Colombia. For each of the brands (Huggies, Pequeñín and Kids 123) a rational campaign associated with infant ill-treatment social cause was designed. The rational campaign used was the same one; the only thing that changed was the sponsoring brand (Figure 2).

Each one of the six experimental groups was presented the respective campaign. For example, emotional campaign with Huggies brand sponsoring a social cause to help children that have been ill-treated was presented to group number 1. Group 2 was assigned the emotional campaign to help children that have been ill-treated, sponsored by Pequeñín. This was followed in the same way with each one the remaining groups until completing six groups. In each group the researcher delivered to each subject a booklet with the printed campaign and a questionnaire. The researcher requested to open the booklet and carefully observe the campaign. Subsequently, the researcher requested the subjects to answer the scale of empathy developed by Bagozzi and Moore (1994). When the subjects finished answering the scale of empathy, the researcher
invited them to continue answering the scale of intention to help, and to record certain demographic data. At the end of the experiment, the researcher thanked the participants for their cooperation.

**Dependent Measures.** To measure the empathy, a scale developed by Bagozzi and Moore (1994) was adopted to assess the empathy generated by a message through audiovisual means. The scale consists of six Likert type statements. Subjects evaluated the empathy generated by the campaign on a 7-point scale ranging from totally in agreement to totally in disagreement (from 7 to 1, respectively).

The intention to help was measured using the scale developed by Bagozzi and Moore (1994). With a Likert type statement the subjects evaluated their intention to help, on a 7-points scale, ranging from very probably, to not at all probable. (From 7 to 1, respectively).

**RESULTS**

**Validation of the empathy scale.** A research on the dimensionality of the six item scale was carried out for each group. The items were factor analyzed using varimax rotation. The general pattern of results showed two main factors (eigenvalues>1). The two factors across groups accounted for a range of common variance from 60% to 77%. These brands were also tested for internal scale reliability. Over all groups, items B, D, E and F loaded positively on the first factor, and item A loaded positively on the second factor. The correlation between the two factors was 0.51, and it was significant at $p \leq 0.001$. This strong correlation of empathy among the two factors indicates that they are converging on a common underlying construct, thereby providing evidence of convergent validity. For the first factor, the Cronbach alpha ranged from 0.80 to 0.88 across the groups. The results of the confirmatory factorial analysis show that the empathy scale is made up by two dimensions. The first dimension was called empathy towards causes of others. By empathy with causes of others it is understood a situation where the social cause announced is not directly related with family or persons that directly affect the feelings of donor. For example, hunger in Africa, or ill-treatment of children, or of persons different from inquired’ family or relatives.

Empathy for causes of others was operationalized with statements such us “upon seeing that add I could feel the need for protection of children victims of infant ill-treatment, or I felt great compassion for the children victimized with ill-treatment”. The first dimension was evaluated by items B, D, E and F where Cronbach’s alpha exceeds 0.7 (0.84), the threshold Nunnally (1994) recommends for exploratory research. The second dimension was called empathy towards the inquired’ own cause. By own empathy towards a social cause it is understood a situation where the announced cause evokes images, emotions and feelings related directly with the person or with a very close relative. The following statement describes the way in which this dimension was operationalized: “that add made me see the need of taking any kind of action to prevent my children from being victims”. This second dimension was evaluated by items A and C (Cronbach’s alpha<0.7) (Table 1). However, item C was eliminated from the final scale due
TABLE 1
Scale items for Empathy Measurement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Empathy towards causes of others</th>
<th>Empathy towards the inquired's own</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Upon seeing that ad I could feel the need for protection of children victims of infant ill-treatment</td>
<td>That ad made me see the need of taking any kind of action to prevent my children from being victims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>That ad tended to evoke within me a desire to offer protection to the victims of infant ill-treatment</td>
<td>That ad made me feel fear of thinking that I could be an ill-treatment victim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C*</td>
<td>I feel great compassion for the children victimized with ill-treatment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>The ad caused me to have tender feelings of concern for the victims of ill-treatment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Item C was eliminated

FIGURE 3
Interaction between the type of message and intention to help (A) and interaction between the type of message and empathy (B)

A 2 (rational message, emotional message) x 3 (Huggies, Pequeñín, Kids, 123) between-subjects ANOVA on intention to help measure yielded a significant main effect for the type of message ($F_{1,179}=4.135, p \leq 0.05$). The intention to help was significantly higher when the campaign used a rational ad than when the campaign used an emotional ad. Figure 3 shows that the interaction between the type of message and the brand was not significant with regard to the intention to help; notwithstanding, the results obtained show that when the campaign is rational, the intention to help increases, particularly in the brands Huggies and Kids 123 than when the campaign has an emotional content (Huggies: $M=3.7$ vs. 4.7 and Kids: $M=4.4$ vs. 5.0).

To test Hypothesis 2, an ANOVA was run on the two empathy measurements: general empathy, empathy towards causes of others and empathy towards our own causes. A 2 (rational, emotional) x 3 (Huggies, Pequeñín, Kids 123) mixed analysis of variance performed on empathy towards our own causes uses a significant main effect for the type of message ($F_{1,179}=3.638, p \leq 0.05$). The
rational message generated significantly higher empathy towards our own causes than the emotional message, in the three brands. Analysis of variance for empathy towards our own causes showed a marginally significant interaction for the type of message and the brand (F(2,179)=2.815 p ≤ 0.06). In addition, it was found that when the campaign is rational, the empathy towards our own causes increases, particularly in Huggies and Kids 123 brands than when the campaign has an emotional content (Huggies: M=3.8 vs. 5.2 and Kids 123: M=4.1 vs. 5.5).

**DISCUSSION**

The results of the experiment suggest that the rational messages transmitted in printed media concerning brands related with social causes generate more intention to help and empathy for ourselves than emotional messages transmitted in printed media concerning the same brands and associated social cause. The subjects showed an intention to help and empathy for themselves significantly higher when the message was rational than when it was emotional.

The experiment also yielded interesting novel and different conclusions from those suggested by Bagozzi and Moore (1994). On one part, the confirmatory factorial analysis suggests that the empathy construct measured by six Likert type items is made up by two dimensions that were identified by the researchers as empathy towards others and empathy towards oneself. In order to precise the role of the type of message in the empathy, a variance analysis was conducted on the two empathy measures: empathy for others, and empathy for ourselves. When the rational message of a brand associated with a social cause, such as infant ill-treatment, is compared with an emotional message, the results allow to establish that the rational message affects significantly people’s own empathy and does not affect empathy for others. In other words, the rational message has more influence when the individual interiorizes or experiences the cause as something of its own. On the other hand, the results obtained suggest conclusions different from those found by Bagozzi and Moore (1994). In their experiment, these researchers conclude that the emotional type campaigns carried out in audiovisual media generate greater levels of empathy; on the contrary, this research suggests otherwise when the campaign is conducted in printed media.

The results allow to conclude that the type of brand does not play an important role in the intention to help, or in own or others empathy.

In future research, the following must be taken into account: this research reckoned with the participation of students from Universidad de los Andes. In further research, other social causes should be taken into account, including other product categories and having the participation of actual purchasers of the researched products. Finally, the moderator role of empathy with regard to the purchase intention should be explored.

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Co-branding in Advertising: The Issue of Category and Image Fit
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Tine Faseur, Ghent University, Belgium

EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Co-branding has become very popular lately (Bengtsson and Servais 2005). According to Keller (2008), the most important requirement for a successful brand alliance is a logical fit between the allying brands. Especially product category and image fit have been shown to be crucial. Although some studies point to category fit as the driver of co-branding effectiveness (e.g., Park, Jun and Shocker 1996), others found support for image fit being most important (e.g., Simonin and Ruth 1998, Baumgarth 2004, Pruppers, Dawar and Ouwersloot 2007), while the impact of a dual fit hardly has been investigated. We build on the existing research by investigating both main and interaction effects of image and category fit in a joint-advertising context in which the ads impose either top-down or bottom-up processing.

Top-down ads mention or show the product categories and evoke a processing sequence of first category, then brand and next attribute information. In line with the accessibility-diagnosticity framework (Feldman and Lynch 1988), an information cue will be used in an evaluation process when it is accessible and if it is perceived to be more diagnostic than other accessible cues. Product category can be expected to be the most accessible and diagnostic cue for top-down processors. In case of category fit between the allying partners, a match is immediately found. In case of low category-high image fit, the incongruence can be resolved at one of the next levels (Mandler 1982). Because the latter requires more cognitive effort (Samu et al., 1999), we expect that category fit produces more positive brand attitudes than image fit (H1a).

Bottom-up ads show brand characteristics or feature brand logos, and induce first attribute, next brand and then category information processing. Consequently, image fit is expected to be most accessible and diagnostic and to result in more positive responses than category fit (H2a). Moreover, relying on the theory of cognitive economy (Wyer and Srull 1986), it is expected that as soon as the incongruity is resolved, consumers do not look for additional cues. Thus, if in a top-down ad category fit is encountered, image fit does not have an additional impact (H1b), and vice versa for a bottom-up ad (H2b). Finally, a low category-low image fit alliance can be compared to an irresolvable incongruity which may induce negative responses in consumers (H3).

In experiment 1 the hypotheses related to top-down processing (H1a, H1b, H3) are tested, whereas experiment 2 tests the bottom-up processing hypotheses (H2a, H2b, H3).

Experiment 1
A two (image fit: similar image or not) x two (category fit: compatible product or not) between subjects design with control group was set up. A focal brand (Diesel) was teamed with a brand possessing 1. a category and image fit (Nike), 2. a category but no image fit (Kipling), 3. an image, but no category fit (Mars), and 4. neither a category nor image fit (Cent Wafers). The product categories and brands were chosen on the basis of two pretests involving 31 and 67 students, respectively.

Stimuli. Four fictitious ads were created in which the complementarity between the product categories was imposed by showing the two products together. More specifically, in the congruent product setting, a young woman was pictured wearing a jeans and sneakers. In the incongruent product setting, the same young woman was wearing the same jeans with a snack in her pocket. In both cases, the products and brand logos were clearly visible. The headline ran as follows “Candy/Sneakers and jeans, for successful living”. A third pretest involving 80 students confirmed that the ads induced top-down processing.

Procedure. About 168 students participated in an online questionnaire. After being exposed to the test ad, students filled in their attitude towards the focal brand (Diesel) and the extent to which different types of thoughts came to their mind.

Results. Planned contrast analyses comparing the attitude towards the focal brand (Diesel) of the control and the four experimental groups, showed that category fit did not lead to a more positive attitude towards Diesel than image fit (disconfirming H1a), a dual fit was not more effective than only category fit (confirming H1b), and a no fit alliance did not change Ab (disconfirming H3). Taking a look at the type of thoughts respondents generated at ad exposure, no significant differences emerged between the different experimental conditions. This seems to indicate that respondents automatically and effortlessly “went all the way”, producing thoughts at different levels.

Experiment 2
Again, a two (category fit: compatible product or not) x two (image fit: similar image or not) between subjects with control group design was set up. A similar procedure as in experiment 1 was used. This time 125 students participated in the study.

Stimuli. Four fictitious ads were constructed in such a way that they only differed in terms of the brand logo. The ads were created in a way that induces bottom-up processing (a pretest confirmed this). More specifically, the ads showed two similar gift boxes, each with a different logo on it. No pack shots were included and the headline simply ran “For Young & Dynamic People”.

Results. The results largely resemble the ones of experiment 1. Image and category fit led to a similar attitude towards Diesel (disconfirming H2a), a dual fit was equally effective than only image fit (confirming H2b), and a no fit alliance did not change Ab (disconfirming H3). Thought analyses again disconfirmed the theory of cognitive economy.

To conclude, our results indicate that neither the type nor the amount of fit mattered. From the moment respondents perceived a fit between the allying brands, their attitude towards the focal brand improved. This finding could perhaps be explained by the simple ads that were used. Perhaps the theory of cognitive economy and the type of fit does play a role for more complex ads. More research is called for.

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Perceived Influence of Online Reviews: A Comparison of Korea and US
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The Internet is changing the nature and power of WOM (word-of-mouth) communications (Ward and Ostrom 2002). The advent of the Internet has extended consumers’ options for gathering unbiased product information from other consumers and has provided the opportunity for consumers to offer consumption-related advice by engaging in electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004). Online consumer review is one of the important sources of e-WOM communication (Chatterjee 2001). Online consumer review means information on, comments about, and evaluations on a company, product, and service on the Internet by the consumers, themselves. Almost all Internet shopping sites around the world have consumer reviews about goods or sellers. There are a lot of online communities of consumer reviews. Online consumer reviews become important for marketing communication because many consumers consider searching online reviews as the first step of shopping.

The purposes of this research were to examine some research questions on how consumer characteristics affect attitude toward online reviews; what the relationship is between online review attitude and online review usage frequency; which online review attitudes and usages have significant effects on purchase decisions; and are there any cross-cultural differences in these structural relationships. To address these research questions, we developed a structural e-WOM effect model and investigated the structural relationship on a cross-cultural basis.

Hypothesis

The hypothetical model was developed based on a consumer characteristics-attitude-outcome framework. We proposed two variables of consumer characteristics: consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence (CSII) (psycho-graphical characteristics) and the Internet shopping experience (behavioral characteristics). We assumed that these consumer characteristics affect attitude toward the online reviews (perceived usefulness). We hypothesized that attitude toward online reviews related to two kinds of outcome: usage frequency and purchase influence. We assumed that if a positive attitude toward an online review increased the usage level of the online review, then the purchase decision would be influenced more by the online review.

H1: Consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence is positively related to the perceived usefulness of online reviews.
H2: The Internet shopping experience is positively related to the perceived usefulness of online reviews.
H3: The Internet shopping experience is positively related to the usage frequency of online reviews.
H4: Perceived usefulness of online reviews is positively related to the usage frequency of online reviews.
H5: Perceived usefulness of online reviews is positively related to the purchase influence of online reviews.
H6: The usage frequency of online reviews is positively related to the purchase influence of online reviews.
H7: There are cultural effects in the proposed model.

METHOD

Data was collected through personal interviews with (under)graduate students and business workers in Seoul (for the Korean sample) and in Nashville, Tennessee (for the U.S. sample). The final sample size was 877 (508 men : 57.9% and 369 women : 42.1%). The Korean sample consisted of 274 men (60.6%) and 178 women (39.4%) and the U.S. sample consisted of 234 men (55.1%) and 191 women (44.9%). In the Korean sample, 15.2% were in their teens, 75.1% were in their twenties, and 9.7% were over thirty years old. In the U.S. sample, 23.2% were in their teens, 64.9% were in their twenties, and 11.9% were over thirty years old.

Consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence (CSII) was measured using 3 items on a five-point agreement rating (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree; the five-point scale was used for all subsequent items, unless otherwise noted). Perceived usefulness of online review was measured in agreement with the following four statements adapted from Davis et al. (1989). Usage frequency and perceived influence of online reviews of online reviews was measured by agreement with the each three statements.

RESULTS

Although the chi-square values for this model were significant for both the Korean data (184.422 with 59 degrees of freedom [d.f.], p=.00) and the U.S. data (161.473 with 59 d.f., p=.00), this statistic was sensitive to sample size and model complexity; as such, the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and comparative fit index (CFI) was more appropriate for assessing model fit in this case (e.g., Bagozzi and Yi 1988; Bearden, Sharma, and Teel 1982). The overall fit of both data sets was excellent with sufficiently high values in the goodness-of-fit index (GFI) (.94 for the Korean data and .95 for the U.S. data), in the comparative fit index (CFI) (.96 for the Korean data and .98 for the U.S. data) and the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) (.95 for the Korean data and .97 for the U.S. data) and a low root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) (.07 for the Korean data and .06 for the U.S. data).

The entire set of items was then subjected to multigroup CFA analysis, which was a more rigorous way to assess unidimensionality and cross-national equivalence of measures. The full metric invariance was not supported, as the chi-square difference between the non-restricted model and the full metric invariance model was significant ($\chi^2_d (13)$=41.195, p<.01). The chi-square difference between the non-restricted model and the partial metric invariance model was insignificant ($\chi^2_d(10)$=14.332, p>.10). Table 3 presents the procedure and results. This partial invariance model was used in subsequent analyses.

National-level analysis of structural model

The structural model was first estimated independently for the Korean and U.S. samples. The unstandardized estimates of the structural parameters resulting from the separate estimation of the model for Korea and U.S. are provided with t-values and fit indices. The majority of path coefficients were statistically significant (p<.05) for both samples. The path from the Internet shopping experience to usage frequency of online reviews was significant in Korea; however, this was insignificant in the U.S.

Multigroup analysis

The national-level analysis assessed whether the hypothesized relationships among the constructs applied in each country...
separately. We performed multigroup analysis to test for similarities and differences in the structural relationships across the two countries. A significant difference would imply that the path coefficient was statistically different across the two groups.

General Results of Hypothesis Testing

H1, H2, H3, H4, and H5 were fully supported. However, H3 was supported only in the Korean sample. Thus, H3 was partially supported. Multigroup tests (H7) revealed significant differences in the four path coefficient between the two countries.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the understanding of factors influencing the effect of online consumer reviews. The main contribution is the specification, justification, and empirical validation of a set of interrelationships among consumer characteristics (consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence, the Internet shopping experience), attitude toward online reviews (perceived usefulness of online reviews) and outcomes of online reviews (usage frequency and purchase influence of online reviews). Most importantly, this study integrates a cultural effect that significantly moderates key relationships in the proposed model, reflecting the growing importance of online marketing communication in a global setting. The integration of cross-cultural differences as moderators of key antecedents of the effects of online reviews is the key contribution of this study to emerging cross-cultural online marketing communication literature. This research is among the first to investigate factors influencing the effect of online consumer reviews in the context of cross-cultural comparison.

REFERENCES


A Reference Price Effect of Buy-now Prices in Internet Auctions
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
More and more retailers are using Internet auctions as an alternative way of selling their products. Currently, over 750,000 American retailers use the Internet auction website eBay.com as a major channel of distribution, while another 1.5 million individuals supplement their income by selling on eBay—together these businesses accounted for a majority of eBay’s sales, which was over $52.4 billion in 2006 (eBay annual report, 2006).

Internet auctions have provided a different way of selling items, which has led to the creation of new features; such as proxy bidding machines, feedback mechanisms, and buy-now prices (e.g. Cheema et al. 2005). This paper focuses on buy-now prices (BNPs), an important feature that is widely used in Internet auctions. A BNP or a buy-now option is a fixed price offer by the seller which, when exercised by the bidder, instantly ends an auction and sells the item to the bidder at the fixed price, without them having to wait until the completion of the auction.

Conventional wisdom suggests that a BNP negatively affects an auction’s outcome because it imposes an upper bound on selling prices. Thus, auctioneers who seek to maximize auction outcomes should not provide a BNP option (Budish and Takeyama 2001). In spite of this assertion, BNPs are widely used in Internet auctions. Several researchers in economics and marketing have studied the above paradox focusing on the benefits to the bidders, such as, a risk premium for risk-averse bidders to ensure they win the item; or to reduce waiting or transaction costs (e.g., Budish and Takeyama 2001; Mathews 2004; Wang et al. 2004). Our research adds to this literature by providing an additional rationale for setting BNPs from a seller’s perspective.

The objective of this research is to develop and estimate a new model of the reference price effects of BNP on bidders’ WTP in online auctions. We make several important contributions to the literature. First, we estimate a model, which shows that BNPs may serve as reference prices, favorably influencing bidders’ valuations. Furthermore, we study under what conditions a BNP can be most effectively used as an ERP (external reference price).

We propose that sellers may use BNPs to provide important price information to consumers. Hence, BNPs may serve as a reference price, influencing bidders’ willingness to pay (regardless of whether bidders actually execute the BNP option or not). This is consistent with research has shown that seller-supplied ERP play an important role in the formation of consumers’ valuations and purchase decisions (Briesch et al. 1997; Mayhew and Winer 1992; Mazumdar et al. 2005). Adaption Level theory (Helson 1964) and assimilation-contrast theory (Sherif, Sherif and Hovland 1961) predict that consumers exposed to ERPs assimilate this information with previously formed internal reference prices (IRP) and adjust their IRP accordingly.

Research also has found that reserve prices in Internet auctions may serve as reserve prices influencing bidders’ willingness to pay (Ariely and Simonson 2003; Häubl and Popkowski Leszczyc 2003; Kamins, Dreze, and Folkes 2004; Suter and Hardesty 2005). Therefore, we propose that BNPs have a positive reference price effect on bidders’ valuations, leading to higher auction outcomes. In addition, we expect, that this positive effect of a BNP is moderated by the ease of value assessment. Previous research has shown that strategies used to influence customer’s price perceptions tend to be more effective when product values are difficult to assess (Alba et al. 1994; Brint 2003).

Results
We provide the results from two different studies. Study 1 is a controlled field experiment that studies the reference price effect of BNPs on bidders’ valuations in real-life auctions where bidders commit their own money. A 2 (presence of a BNP) x 75 (different products) full factorial design was adopted as the basic design. Each product was sold once with a BNP and once without a BNP. At the completion of the auctions each winner was asked to complete a survey upon collecting the item won in the auction (the response rate was 81%). The results of Study 1 provide support for our hypothesis that retailers in auctions can use BNPs to positively influence the selling prices obtained. In addition, this effect was stronger when bidders perceived the value of an item to be more difficult to assess. Finally, on average, bidders found it easier to assess the value of an item when a BNP was present, indicating that bidders may use BNPs in assessing the value of items.

Study 2 is a computerized laboratory experiment that focuses on the moderating effects of 1) difficulty in assessing a product’s value and 2) of product class (low versus high end products). We conducted a two (ease of assessing value: memory cards vs. diamond earrings) by two (product class: high-end vs. low-end) by two (BNP: presence vs. absence) mixed design with product category as the within-subject factor. A total of 87 subjects participated in this study. Results provided further support for the reference price effect for BNPs. Results find support for two moderating variables, the ease of value assessment and product class, and that the reference price effect of BNPs exists only for high-end products that are difficult to assess.

Most previous research on BNPs has focused solely on the behavior of bidders; in contrast, this paper considers the seller’s decision-making process as well. Different from normative economics theory, we find that BNPs function as external reference prices, and have an impact on bidders’ valuations. A strong reference price effect is observed, resulting in an increase in bidders’ WTPs by 23.05%. This reference price effect is stronger when the value of a product is more difficult to assess and for high-end products. These findings have important implications for seller strategy in online auctions and for consumer welfare.

References


The Magnitude of Transfer of Image and Performance Associations to Similar and Dissimilar Extensions
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This research examines how the type of brand associations (unique/non-unique, image/performance) affects the magnitude of transfer from an established parent brand to a newly launched extension, whether similar or dissimilar. Research on brand extension has addressed the notion of extension similarity showing that dissimilar extension may be evaluated differently than similar ones without specifying how magnitude of transfer between the parent brand and the extension is affected by image and performance based associations and the fact they are unique or non-unique to the parent brand. The paper suggests that transfer of brand associations to an extension is more automatic for image associations than for performance related associations because of a different categorization process.

An association is generally « strong » when it is based on direct experience and/or frequent exposure to communications related to it (Aaker, 1991). The strength of an association depends on the pertinence of information for the consumer as well as the consistency with which this information has been communicated over time (Keller, 1998; Krishnan, 1996). An association is also “favorable” when it is positive and relevant i.e. it communicates to consumers the brand relevant attributes and advantages (Keller, 1998; 1993). Thus, among the associations that are susceptible to be transferred to the extension there are those with positive but also those with negative connotations (Krishnan, 1996). Furthermore, the success of an extension resides on the marketing manager’s capability to foster transfer of positive associations as well as to inhibit transfer of negative ones (Aaker & Keller, 1990). Finally, an association can also be “unique” to the brand when it is not shared by competitors (Keller, 1998; Krishnan, 1996). The literature on categorization and brand associations has suggested the existence of two types of associations i.e. image-based referring to abstract attributes or performance-based which relate more to concrete functional features of the product or service. Research on brand extension has concentrated on the notion of similarity showing that dissimilar extension may be evaluated differently than similar ones without describing the magnitude of transfer between the parent brand and the extension. The paper fills this gap by specifying how image-based or performance-based brand associations affect the magnitude of transfer from an established parent brand to an extension, similar or dissimilar.

Transfer of brand associations maybe affected by the perceived similarity between a new extension and its parent brand (Park et al. 1991; Fiske, 1982; Levy and Tybout, 1989). This attempt matching between a parent brand and its extension is consistent with the top-down transfer processes from a prototype (e.g. parent brand) to a new product/extension (Mao and Krishnan, 2006; Kardes et al., 2004). If the similarity between the parent brand associations and the extension associations increases or diminishes so will the schematic fit which in turn will limit the transfer of associations (Meyvis and Janiszewski, 2004; Boush and Loken, 1991) and may be function of the type of associations whether they are performance or image-oriented (Park et al. 1991).

In order to provide respondents with reliable and valid measures, a series of four pretests was conducted. Given that a visual printed stimulus was used to test the hypotheses, a natural experiment was conducted with two levels (similar / dissimilar) of extensions and four types of brand associations: a) unique image associations, b) non-unique image associations, c) unique performance associations and, c) non-unique performance associations. Respondents were recruited by e-mail (Chernev, 2006) out of a commercial database representative of the target population. 334 questionnaires were returned. Respondents were randomly assigned to two conditions (i.e. similar and dissimilar extension cells) and were asked to evaluate each type of association first in the parent brand and subsequently in the extension using repeated measures analysis of variance.

This paper shows that the effect of image and performance associations depends if they are unique or non-unique to the parent brand on magnitude of transfer to similar and dissimilar extensions. When a brand association is unique to an established parent brand and image based, magnitude of transfer is strong and automatic whether the extension is similar or dissimilar to the core brand. In contrast, when the association is unique and performance related transfer to either a similar or a dissimilar extension. This paper suggests that unique parent brand image associations are easier to categorize in the extension than their unique performance counterparts. It seems that unique concrete performance associations must establish themselves in an extension as opposed to unique abstract image ones that transfer more easily to the same extension.

In the case of non-unique parent brand associations, transfer patterns are quite different than unique associations. Non-unique image associations are suggested to automatically transfer to a similar extension while they don’t appear to transfer when the extension is dissimilar. Here, an image association of an established parent brand even non-unique will be strong enough to transfer to the extension when the latter is similar to the parent brand. However, if the extension is categorized as dissimilar, transfer does not occur. When the parent brand association is non-unique and performance based, transfer is not observed whether the extension is similar or dissimilar to the parent brand as it was the case when associations are unique and performance related.

The implications of this paper are important for brand extension development. First, the image positioning of an established parent brand impacts transfer of its related associations to an extension in a strong fashion so the desirability of any image association, unique and non-unique, must be carefully established as transfer is likely to automatically transfer whether the extension is similar or dissimilar. Performance related associations are less of an issue when launching an extension as they don’t transfer as easily as their image counterparts due to a more piecemeal evaluation in the extension.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In this paper, we investigate how advertisements for extensions can trigger different reactions with respect to consumers’ attitudes towards new line and brand extensions. Using a structural equation model, we research potential feedback effects of the extension on consumers’ perception of the parent brand with a sample of 509 Belgians. The relative importance of attitude towards the advertisement, parent brand quality, and perceived fit is considered for both extension evaluation and parent brand feedback effects. Results are compared between two types of extensions (line vs. brand extension) and two types of advertising strategies (informational vs. positive emotional).

Literature review and hypotheses

According to categorization theory, people faced with an evaluative task will first attempt to classify the object within a certain category on the basis of salient cues (Fiske, Lin, and Neuberg 1999). As the fit between the extension and the parent brand decreases, it will become harder for consumers to classify the extension within the category of the parent brand. Consumers will then revert to more piecemeal processing. Parent brand quality primarily influences extension evaluation through category-based processing, while Aad is likely to influence brand-extension evaluation through piecemeal processing (Nan 2006). As perceived fit with the parent brand decreases, influence of perceived parent brand quality on extension evaluation should decrease while the impact of one’s attitude toward the extension ad should concurrently increase (Nan 2006).

H2b: The influence of perceived parent brand quality on extension evaluation is more important for line extensions than for brand extensions.

H2c: The impact of Aad on extension evaluation is greater for brand than for line extensions.

In the absence of specific extension information, subjects will rely on accessible diagnostic cues to evaluate the extension, such as brand name and perceived parent brand quality, as well as perceived fit to make inferences (Simmons and Lynch 1991). As other relevant information becomes available, i.e. in an informational advertisement, the impact of a single cue (e.g., perceived fit) diminishes (Klink and Smith 2001). Consumers will then more likely rely on their evaluation of (the information provided in) the advertisement to evaluate the extension.

H3a: Perceived parent brand quality and perceived fit between the parent brand and the extension are relatively more important determinants of extension evaluation in case of positive emotional advertising appeals than in the case of informational advertising appeals.

H3b: Attitude toward the ad is a relatively more important determinant of extension evaluation in case of an informational appeal than in the case of a positive emotional appeal.

In addition, with an informational appeal, consumers will feel they have received relevant information to evaluate the extension by and this should have a greater impact on their attitude toward the parent brand introducing the proposed extension. With an emotional advertising appeal, consumers will rather think about the ad execution, and compare this to existing brand knowledge and affect. Therefore, their attitude toward the advertisement should transfer more easily to the parent brand.

H6a: Feedback effects of a brand’s extension to the parent brand are greater with an informational appeal than with emotional appeals.

H6b: Aad for the extension ad has a stronger impact for emotional appeals than for an informational appeal.

Methodology

To verify our hypotheses, we set up a 2(type of ad) x 2 (type of extension) x 2 (type of product) full factorial design. To avoid specific brand effects, we used extensions in two different product categories: laptop computers (PC) and candy bars (CB), which were pooled. We recruited 509 respondents representative of the Belgian population in terms of gender (50.3% men), age (between 18 and 64, evenly spread), education (53.3% higher educated), and social class (approx. 25% in each of 4 classes) from an opt-in internet consumer panel. The manipulation checks confirmed that the ad manipulations were successful, and that brand extensions were perceived to be of significantly lower fit than the line extensions.

Analyses and Results

A structural equation model was estimated first for the entire sample and fit the pooled data rather well ($\chi^2(82)=273.235$ (p<.001), RMSEA=.068, CFI=.979, TLI=.972). It was hypothesized (and confirmed) (H1) that perceived brand quality, perceived fit between the brand and the extension, and Aad would significantly influence consumers’ attitude toward an extension (Aext). Attitude toward the extension in turn partly mediated the effects of brand quality and Aad and fully mediated the effect of perceived fit on attitude toward the parent brand (Apb) (H4).

We then conducted two separate multiple-group analyses (line vs. brand extensions and informational vs. positive emotional appeal) and found structural noninvariance for both models in the hypothesized directions.

The transfer of perceived parent brand quality to the extension was more outspoken for line ($\beta=.351$, p<.001) than for brand extensions ($\beta=.195$, p<.001) (H2b). Fit was non-significant for line extensions ($\beta=.016$, p=.802), but significant for brand extensions ($\beta=.114$, p=.035) (H2a). H2c could not be supported because of lack of statistical significance ($\Delta \chi^2(1)$=4.89, p=.484).

Aad had a stronger effect on Apb for line extensions than for brand extensions (p<.001). The effect for brand extensions was not significant ($\beta=.040$, p=.490). For brand extensions, the attitude toward the extension ad is probably less relevant, because the product is in a different category, and will have its own associations.
The effects of fit and brand quality were significantly greater with the positive emotional appeal than with the informational appeal (H3a). Aad in turn was significantly more important for extension evaluation with the informational appeal ($\beta=.718, p<.001$) than with the positive emotional appeal ($\beta=.409, p<.001$) (H3b).

The effect of Aext on Apb was also significantly stronger with an informational appeal ($\beta=.412, p<.001$) than with the positive emotional appeal ($\beta=.179, p<.002$) (H6a). On the other hand, Aad had a greater effect on Apb for positive emotional appeals ($\beta=.188$) than for informational appeals ($\beta=.047$) (p=.011) (H6b). A positive emotional ad for a particular extension benefits not only the extension itself, but can also engender more positive brand evaluations for the brand as a whole.

The paper concludes by highlighting some limitations and offering suggestions for further research.

References


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Time is the ultimate constraint on human activity. In contrast to money, which can be traded among people and saved for the future, time can’t be stored, borrowed or lent. We are given 24 hours which must be spent each day, and how we distribute these 24 hours to our daily activities should tell something about how we live our lives. Having this purpose in mind, we propose a latent class model that addresses several methodological challenges in the study of how individuals allocate this valuable, perishable and limited resource in their daily lives, creating a typology of “time styles” that reflect the typical ways people spend a day.

In order to understand how individuals differ in their usage of time throughout the day, one must first acknowledge that we are quite diverse in our needs, leading to different time priorities. Any attempt to understand how we spend our days must account for this heterogeneity in “tastes” or life priorities. Life offers us many options and opportunities, and therefore we each engage in only a subset of the many possible daily activities, depending on our diverse needs. As a consequence, time-use reports are highly sparse, with a high percentage of zero-allocations to many of the available activities. Moreover, we all live on a fixed daily budget of 24 hours so that any time we devote to one activity reduces the time available for other activities and consequently, all activities compete against each other for our precious time. For this reason, we must take into account the trade-offs different individuals make to allocate their fixed time budget, which we accomplish with a constrained utility maximization model.

We assume that members of a latent class have an implicit random utility function for each life activity, and allocate time to these activities to maximize the total utility derived from them, subject to the constraint that the total allocated time must be exactly 1440 minutes (24 hours). This constrained optimization makes it possible to study time-use over the entire day, while accounting for the binding constraint on total time and allowing for zero allocations, thereby explaining why individuals choose not to engage in many activities, leading to the highly truncated data commonly observed in time diaries.

We apply our proposed model to data from the American Time Use Survey (ATUS) collected by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2006, identifying 11 segments of people with distinctive “time-styles,” but with some commonalities in time utilities. We find that, across all segments, marginal utilities decrease quite substantially after the first 30 minutes are spent on an activity. For example, the marginal utility for food and drink preparation and clean up drop to only 0.2% of the initial marginal utility after only 30 minutes, suggesting that anyone engaged in this activity is likely to spend a short time in it. This decay in marginal utility is less severe for activities such as Education (3.8%), Sleeping (2.6%), work and work-related activities (2.2%) suggesting that people engaged in these activities will spend more time in them.

As one would expect, personal care activities (sleeping, eating & drinking and other personal care) show the highest priorities across all segments. The same is true for leisure and entertainment, leading to high incidence rates for these activities across all classes. Two classes (A and B) also show high initial marginal utilities for work and work-related activities and work and education-related travel, while another (class C) shows relatively high initial marginal utilities for work and education-related travel and education.

They also represent the most sleep-deprived time-styles, as they spend 81 and 42 minutes less of sleep than average, respectively. Class C represents the time-style of students, as it spends 4 and half more hours of education than the average daily report. We also identify three other latent classes (D, E and F) reflecting the time-style of homemakers, with higher than average time spent on committed work (housework, food and drink preparation, childcare, shopping). Five other classes (G, H, I, J, and K) are more focused on personal care and free time as the other classes. Class G spends the most time in sports, exercise & recreation, and is among the highest on socializing and eating & drinking, reflecting an active leisure-oriented time-style. Classes H, J and K are quite peculiar, as they spend much more time sleeping (286 minutes more than average), on leisure and entertainment (391 minutes more than average) and personal care (478 minutes more than average), respectively.

Looking at the demographic profile and reporting day for the different “time-styles,” we find that classes A and B represent time-styles observed mostly on weekdays reported by subjects ages in their 20’s to 50’s, in upper income brackets who are active in the labor force. These first two time-styles clearly illustrate the “poverty of time” discussed in the literature with less time available for sleep and leisure, compared to other time-styles.

Time-style C also is reported mostly on weekdays, by single (79%) young (64% under age 30) subjects, which is consistent with the fact that this time-style shows the highest time spent in education. The remaining time-styles are reported mainly (but not exclusively) on weekends, which account for more than 62% of the cases in these classes. Time-styles D and F, which emphasize committed work, have higher representations of married females with at least one child under 12, as one would expect. Time-style E, which shows more than 6 hours of housework in a day, is comprised by older, childless, middle-income subjects. Time-style H, which shows almost 14 hours of sleep in a day and focuses its free time on socialization, has higher than average proportions of young, single, non-working, childless, non-white, lower-income and males. The most leisure and entertainment-oriented time-style (J), which spends over 10 hours in this particular activity, has a higher than average proportion of older, single, non-working, childless, low-income males.
Mi Swing Es Tropical–But Not My Consumers

Economic Realism and Cultural Contradictions in Latin American Marketing of Apple’s i-Conic Products

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In this age of globalized media and densely connected ethnoscapes of USA and Latin America, consumers from Latin America are well aware of the features and iconic prominence of Apple’s electronics products. Their access to such products, however, is extremely limited due to macro-level or firm-level economic, regulatory and strategic factors. The constricted flows of Apple’s i-Conic products to Latin America juxtaposed with unrestricted and appropriated flows of cultural capital elements from these countries create feelings of neglect and resentment across the large range of Latin American consumers. This paper is driven by the following questions: What are the international cultural consequences of the perceived neglect of the Latin American market by Apple, and how can these be explained in terms of frameworks for unfolding globalization?

Given the economically rational corporate and consumer acts, as well as the cultural complexity and contradictory flows as consequences of Apple’s marketing of its highly sought iconic products, this paper presents a framework to understand the interplay of these forces. In the contemporary interconnected world with open social media, such contradictory cultural elements in the marketing of iconic brands attract notice and often very negative feedbacks, grounded in the center-periphery dynamics of the global cultural economy. Based on netnographic interpretation of a gadget oriented blog site and other sources, we find that the Apple’s affinity for Latin cultural themes in its marketing often produces patterns of resentment, stereotyping, xenophobia, appeals to economic realism and political digs from consumers.

As consumptionscapes globalize–via media, technology, finance and people connections–desirable objects of the global consumer culture and, even more importantly, the desire for such objects, cannot be confined to merely the center of the global economy. Desire and styles in a globalized world spill over quickly from the center into peripheral locations. Since the flows of desire have become relatively frictionless, consumers in the periphery resent situations where flows of objects of desire are constricted, as appears to be the case with Apple’s i-Conic products in Latin and Caribbean markets. The cultural dominance of the center, however, in part derives from the center’s ability to identify, appropriate, absorb, reposition and re-present appealing cultural elements derived from the periphery. The hit “Mi Swing es Tropical” iPod commercial is a vivid illustration of this process, as employed by Apple and its supporting advertising and media system.

In way of protest, lowbrow and crude Latin cultural elements (bandolier outfit, Mariachi-in-chief designation for Apple CEO, and references to his alleged penchant for tofu-stuffed jalapeños) are employed by the Gizmodo blog in the article “Apple to Latin America: We Don’t Care About You, Compadres.” Comments on the Gizmodo article from many in Latin American echoed the frustration expressed by the blog author but North American comments (including from Mexico) were either dismissive of the claims in the Gizmodo article, or blamed Latin American political regimes. In the Apple vs. Latin American consumers contest, the balance of economic power lies clearly in Apple’s favor. In fact, the consumers of the center seem to rise up in defense of the brand to squelch the attempted subversion from the (oft-aspirant) consumers of the periphery. This article highlights the complex relationships between the center and periphery, where the type and extent of negative consequences of consumerism evolve from the interacting consumptionscapes of the center and the periphery.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Recently, an executive at the headquarters of a prominent business in San Francisco paid to have the sign with the building’s number changed despite no real change in the address. The executive explained that his astro-numerologist had advised the change in order to improve business. The executive insisted that the changing of the building’s number on the sign “worked” and that business is improving (Russell 2006). In a global business context, Chinese manufacturers favor the use of digit 8 and avoid using the digit 4 in their pricing as buyers in China associate the digit 8 with “enrichment” and digit 4 with “death” (Simmons and Schindler 2001). This numeric superstition also results in a price premium for properties on the 8th floor in Cantonese societies (Chau, Ma and Ho 2001). In Japan, gifting Kit Kat as a “good luck charm” has become a widespread ritual during exam season (Ryan 2005). Numerous executives admit to extensively using the services of feng shui experts (Tsang 2004). Lottery players who pick their own numbers have higher expectations of success (Langer 1975). Gamblers engage in superstitious rituals before making a decision, millions of individuals “touch wood” each day or avoid walking under a ladder, or use their “lucky pen” while taking a test.

Although a variety of consumption activities are driven by superstitious behavior, there has been a surprising lack of attention given to superstitions in the consumer research literature (Kramer and Block 2008). There are a variety of different superstitious behaviors that are motivated by an assortment of underlying psychological and social processes. The extant literature in anthropology and sociology is unable to consistently explain the drivers of this behavior. Vaidyanathan, Aggarwal, Cha and Chun (2007) presented a comprehensive model of superstitious behaviors that attempted to resolve the conflicts between the different types of superstitious behavior and individuals’ motivation for performing the behavior. The objective of this conceptual article is to build on that comprehensive model of the mechanisms driving superstitious behavior to present a series of testable propositions and draw clear implications of these propositions for marketing and public policy.

The model posits that people are driven to engage in such behaviors because they serve to reduce the tension created by an unmet need. Based on a review of the literature on superstition across sociology, anthropology, psychology, and marketing, they classify the needs served by superstitions into (1) Functional Needs, (2) Psychological Needs, and (3) Socio-Cultural Needs. At the most basic level, people may engage in superstitious behaviors because they believe in its efficacy at influencing future outcomes. Research has shown that this belief in the ability of superstitious behaviors to affect outcomes is influenced by the amount of uncertainty in the environment (Kramer and Block 2008) and the importance of the outcome to their lives. Additionally, the more an individual believes in their ability to control future outcomes with superstitious rituals, the greater the risk proneness of the individual relative to the focal behavior and the less responsive the individual is to counter-belief feedback relative to the focal behavior. There is also evidence that if individuals take an active part in choosing the superstitious object, they will have a greater belief in its effectiveness at influencing outcomes. This implies that marketers may be able to influence consumer behavior by reinforcing the instrumentality of superstition-based behavior, enhancing the salience of the outcome, and engaging consumers in the choice of a particular superstition-based object. Such activities may also result in public policy implications to the extent that they deceive consumers into purchasing ineffective products.

Even when individuals do not explicitly believe in the ability of a superstitious behavior to influence a future outcome, they may engage in such behaviors to satisfy a psychological need for individuals with a strong desire to control an uncertain environment by engaging in some active behaviors. Positive and negative counterfactual thinking may also drive superstitious behavior. We present hope and anticipated regret as bipolar anchors to forward-looking counterfactual thinking by individuals deciding whether to initiate or continue a superstitious behavior. We posit that the initiation of superstitious behavior is driven more by hope of a favorable outcome and that the continuation of a superstitious behavior is driven more by anticipated regret of discontinuing the behavior. Marketers may be able to manipulate consumer emotions towards superstitious-related products by using communication strategies that manipulate hope and anticipated regret.

Finally, there is an entire class of superstitious behaviors that are driven by social norms rather than a belief in the instrumentality of the behavior. This is particularly notable in East Asian cultures where there is a strong pressure to conform to social norms. In fact, research has suggested that Chinese are among the most superstitious people in the world (Kramer and Block 2008; Tsang 2004). We propose that individuals in East Asian cultures engage in more social-need-satisfaction rituals than individuals in Western cultures. Further, based on research examining variations in attribution styles between Westerners and East Asians, we propose that focal-based communication messages will have a greater influence on superstitious behavior in East Asian Cultures while field-based communication messages will have a greater influence in Western cultures. We present the marketing implications of these propositions.

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Promoting Help for Victims of Child Abuse: Using Positive or Negative, Certain or Uncertain Emotions?

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Nonprofit marketers face an ongoing challenge to persuade as many people as possible to donate as much money as possible to their organization. It has already been shown that emotional advertisements can serve as strong persuaders to motivate people to help others in need (e.g., Bagozzi and Moore 1994). It is intuitively clear, however, that not all emotions will be equally effective in motivating all kinds of people to donate money to all kinds of good causes. One element that is expected to influence the impact of different kinds of ad-evoked emotions is the compatibility of these emotions with the ad appeal. According to MacInnis and Park (1991), advertisements will be most effective when the different executional elements of the advertisement show a “fit”. When different ad cues are complementary, they reinforce the basic message. Furthermore, emotions also need to be compatible with the characteristics of the perceiver of the ad. Several researchers have shown that personal characteristics and people’s personality can moderate the effectiveness of advertisements evoking different emotions (e.g., Bosmans and Baumgartner, 2005; Chang, 2006).

The emotions that people experience in a particular situation (e.g., reading an advertisement) are based on a personal interpretation of the situation on several cognitive dimensions (e.g., the cognitive appraisal theory, Smith and Ellsworth 1985). When investigating the effect of different ad-evoked emotions on ad effectiveness and helping intentions, one should therefore examine the contribution of the cognitive appraisal dimensions underlying these emotions. In this study, the focus is on two dimensions that seem highly relevant in a social marketing context: the valence dimension and the certainty dimension. Furthermore, we hypothesize that the effect of positive versus negative and of certain versus uncertain ad-evoked emotions will depend on their compatibility with (a) the ad appeal: advertisements showing one identified victim versus a group of unidentified victims and (b) the characteristics of regular versus non-regular donors.

With regard to the valence dimension of emotions, Obermiller (1995) indicates that positive ad-evoked emotions stress the significance of an individual donor action, increasing the perceived consumer effectiveness, whereas negative ad-evoked emotions concentrate more on the severity of the problem, making it more salient. Concerning the certainty dimension of emotions, it has been shown that people who feel uncertain (certain) about a situation are highly unconfident (confident), express pessimistic (optimistic) risk perceptions and are more risk-avoiding (seeking) in their actions (Lerner & Kelner 2001; Raghunathan & Pham 1999; Tiedens & Linton, 2001).

Concerning the ad appeal, we expect that when an advertisement shows a single identified victim (versus many unidentified victims), the problem will be perceived as more vivid and familiar (Schelling, 1968), concern for the problem will increase, and people will care more about the problem (Small and Loewenstein, 2005). This is expected to make the risks (for the needy people) appear to be more proximal and concrete. Therefore negative (high concern) and uncertain (high risk) emotions are hypothesized to be more compatible with a single victim appeal (high concern and risk), leading to higher ad evaluations and helping intentions. Positive (lower severity) and certain (low risk) emotions, on the other hand, will be more appropriate for advertisements portraying multiple unidentified victims (lower risk and concern).

Regarding the people’s donation history, regular as opposed to non-regular donors are expected to be more interested in and concerned with the problems of other people. Furthermore, they are expected to trust nonprofit organizations and have confidence that the organizations will help the people in need (Sargeant, Ford, and West, 2006). Therefore, negative (low concern) and uncertain (low confidence) emotions are expected to be more compatible with non-regular donors (low concern and confidence), and positive (high concern) and certain (high confidence) emotions are expected to be more compatible with regular donors (high concern and confidence), with compatibility leading to higher ad attitudes and helping intentions.

To test the hypotheses, advertisements were created to promote a fictitious confidence centre that helps victims of child abuse. For each of the two appeals (one identified victim versus multiple unidentified victims), four advertisements were created that were intended to evoke a positive certain, a positive uncertain, a negative certain, and a negative uncertain emotion. A web-based questionnaire was set up, using the program “The Websurveyor”. The questionnaire was sent to 2000 people. Data were collected from 239 adult respondents, divided equally into women and men, from 30 to 60 years, randomly assigned to one of the eight advertisements. Participants were asked to carefully read the test ad, to score the emotions evoked by the ad on the valence and the certainty dimension, to indicate their ad and organizational attitude and their helping intentions (Aad, Aorg and HI), and to indicate to what extent they were a regular donor.

Hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analyses. Based on the idea that the experience of emotions depends on individuals’ ratings of the stimulus on different appraisal dimensions, respondents’ ratings on the valence and the certainty dimensions were used as independent variables rather than categorical variables.

Results indicated that the impact of the certainty dimension of emotions was moderated by ad appeal and donation history in the expected direction. Concerning the interaction effects between the valence dimension of the emotions and the moderators, the expectations of this study were only partially confirmed. Positive emotions were more or equally effective than negative ones under all conditions, probably, because a negative emotion overemphasized the severity of the child abuse problem (Obermiller, 1995).

References
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East Meets West?
Regulatory Focus and Advertising Appeals in Korea, Canada, and the United States
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research that assesses cross-cultural differences in persuasion has revealed mixed results. Some researchers have found that different cultural appeals are utilized among different cultures in accordance with their cultural values (Han and Shavitt 1994; Kim and Markus 1999). However, more recent content analyses of advertising in Asian countries reveal that advertising appeals have seemingly become more Westernized (Khairullah and Khairullah 2002; Zhang and Shavitt 2003). Because changes in advertising appeals, in a given society, often echo changes in consumption and cultural values (Pollay 1986), the recently observed Westernized appeals in Asian advertising may reflect Asians’ Westernization.

It is not clear if advertising that promotes new values, which are different from a culture’s traditional values, may prompt group members to be resistant to potential changes in their society. The focus of our study is to further address this issue. By using regulatory focus theory (Higgins 1997), we first examine whether the strong differences previously found between North American and Korean ads, in accordance to individualism and collectivism themes, remain apparent considering that Korea has recently undergone a dramatic shift toward embracing Western cultural values. Second, we seek to determine whether Koreans are likely to accept this potential shift toward Western ideals that may be apparent in Korean print advertising.

In Study 1, we conducted a content analysis of magazine ads, in which Korean and Canadian coders rated randomly selected ads from their own culture concerning promotion focus and prevention focus regulatory themes. Contrary to earlier findings (Han and Shavitt 1994; Kim and Markus 1999), Korean ads were more likely than North American ads to include promotion focus themes, and for most themes, Korean ads were significantly less likely than North American ads to be prevention focus oriented (although there was no overall difference). These findings were consistent across all magazine and product categories. Although this pattern of results may reflect that Korea has undergone a major economic and cultural shift toward Western ideas and ideals, as many other Asian countries are experiencing, it is possible that even if current Korean advertising is meant to commonly communicate Western values, Korean consumers may not be effectively persuaded by the advertising appeals. To evaluate the effectiveness of advertising appeals in recent Korean ads (i.e., promotion focus oriented), Study 2 was conducted.

In Study 2, 50 undergraduate and graduate students (21 Koreans and 29 European Canadians) were shown a set of magazine ads and they were asked about their attitudes toward the ads. Each set included six Korean ads and six North American ads. The ads contained either high promotion focus themes with low prevention themes, or high prevention focus themes with low promotion themes, which were based on the results from Study 1. The ads were matched by the product across culture. Participants evaluated the ad, the product, and their intention of purchasing the product. The three ratings were significantly inter-correlated (mean r=.67), thus they were transformed to z scores and were averaged to form an ad evaluation index. The results showed that Canadians preferred North American ads to Korean ads, whereas Koreans preferred Korean ads to North American ads ($F=27.32, p<.001$). More importantly, Canadians preferred ads with high promotion and low prevention focus themes, whereas Koreans preferred ads with high prevention and low promotion focus themes ($F=3.89, p=.054$).

For Study 2, we took existing ads and asked about participants’ attitudes toward the ads; we found that Koreans liked ads with high prevention focus themes compared to Canadian participants. Recognizing that the ads Koreans favored, more than Canadians, might be genuinely attractive and potentially convey prevention themes as well, we used a message framing method to experimentally manipulate the ads for Study 3 in an attempt to clarify this issue.

In Study 3, we manipulated an ad for a brand that is familiar to both Korean and Canadian participants (i.e., Dove body lotion), using a message framing method with either a promotion focus (e.g., to make your skin soft and smooth, use Dove body lotion; enrich your skin in cold and dry winter weather) or prevention focus theme (e.g., to prevent dry and itchy skin, use Dove body lotion; Dove body lotion will protect your skin from cold and dry winter weather). Twenty-five Korean and 32 Canadian undergraduate students from a Canadian university were asked about their attitudes toward the ad. Attitude measures were the same as Study 2. We conducted a 2 (culture: Koreans vs. Canadians) X 2 (regulatory focus framing: promotion vs. prevention) ANOVA. The results showed that there was no significant main effect of either culture of participants or the message framing ($F=1.32, ns; F=.001, ns$, respectively), however we found an interaction between the two ($F=3.4, p=.07$). Simple effect analyses revealed that there was a significant difference in preference of the prevention framed ad between Canadians and Koreans; Koreans significantly preferred the prevention focus framed message compared to Canadians. Canadians tended to prefer the promotion focus framed ad, whereas Koreans tended to prefer the prevention focus framed ad, although this result did not reach statistical significance.

In sum, it appears that there may be significant discrepancies between what advertisers try to communicate with consumers in Korea (Study 1) and what Korean consumers most value (Study 2 and 3).

References
Affective Responses to Images in Print Advertising: Affect Integration in a Simultaneous Presentation Context
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Print advertisements routinely employ more than one image. Often the multiple images in an advertisement are of the same valence, either all positive (an ad for a vacation destination where multiple positive images of the place are shown) or all negative (a social marketing ad for wearing seatbelts where multiple negative images associated with not wearing one are shown). Many other advertisements, however, employ both positive and negative visuals in the same ad.

Previous research has explored sequentially presented affective stimuli, usually of the same valence (e.g., negative events of varying intensity). For example, Fredrickson and Kahneman (1993), indicate that the global affective response to a particular event is a joint combination of the peak level of affect experienced, as well as the affect encountered during the last portion of the event (i.e., the “peak-end rule”). Work on how people integrate multiple affect inducing images in a single exposure setting (as in an ad) has not been done previously. Therefore, we build on the extant literature and develop hypotheses about the integration of simultaneously presented affective images within an advertisement. Specifically:

H1a: In a simultaneous presentation context, the overall positive affect generated when combining affective images of positive valence in the same advertisement is a function of the peak positive image.

H1b: In a simultaneous presentation context, the overall negative affect generated when combining affective images of negative valence in the same advertisement is a function of the peak negative image.

H2: In a simultaneous presentation context, when oppositely valenced images are combined in the same advertisement, a compensatory mechanism will be used to arrive at the overall negative and overall positive affect experienced.

These hypotheses are tested in a series of three experiments involving advertising. Participants in each experiment view an ad for a camera, which purports to show several images taken by the camera. After viewing the ad for 30 seconds, participants fill out a 10 item affect scale

Experiment 1
The first experiment investigates whether a “peak” mechanism is operating when affective images of the same valence are simultaneously presented. Results of this study support H1a and H1b, indicating that when valence is held constant, the peak determines the overall affective reaction

Experiment 2
The second experiment investigates whether a compensatory mechanism operates when images of opposite valence but similar magnitude are presented together. Results of this experiment support Hypothesis 2. This was true for both the positive affect scale and the negative affect scale.

Experiment 3
The third experiment investigates whether the compensatory mechanism observed in experiment 2 would hold when both the valence and magnitude were altered. Further support is found for Hypothesis 2. As predicted, a compensatory mechanism was still observed.

Previous affect integration research suggests that non-compensatory mechanisms best describe the way in which we form overall affective impressions of an event, with disproportionate weight being given to the peak and end points. This prior research, however, has almost exclusively focused on the integration of stimuli of a common valence, within a sequential presentation context. Results from the present research indicate that, in a print advertising context, while a peak mechanism might best describe the integration of simultaneously presented affective images of common valence, a compensatory mechanism best describes the integration of simultaneously presented affective images of different valence (i.e. one positive and one negative). This is true both in the case of oppositely valenced images of the same intensity and oppositely valenced images of differing intensity.

The compensatory mechanism witnessed here is interesting on two fronts. First, purely compensatory findings in affect integration research, to this point, have not been observed. Second, whereas information integration literature suggests that simultaneous presentation leads to more non-compensatory the opposite is observed with respect to affect integration. This further underscores the need to consider research regarding affect integration and cognitive information integration as distinct

There are some caveats to the findings in this study. This study investigated affect integration in a simultaneous presentation context, however the exact sequence of the processing of the images by individuals was not examined. Across the three experiments, the order of affective stimuli (position of the images on the page) was counterbalanced, and there were no order (position) effects in any of the experiments. Nonetheless, eye-tracking evidence would provide useful insights into the exact sequence of the processing and indicate whether there is systematic processing of the stimuli in terms of order (e.g., processing the images left to right similar to text).

This research presents the first work to examine visual affect integration under simultaneous presentation of affective stimuli. An interesting picture of the process is emerging, which is consistent with, but different from the sequential presentation literature. We hope that these intriguing findings will spur greater interest in understanding how people respond to simultaneously presented affective stimuli, particularly in a print advertising context.

References


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction and justification

Store cards as a form of credit has increased in popularity in recent years, probably because it is easier to obtain than most other credit systems. It is unfortunately thus afforded less respect than for example bank credit cards. A major concern is that many consumers who obtain store cards are not necessarily competent to manage the credit facility and generous credit limits that are approved for their use (Chien & Devaney, 2001). Overspending thus seems almost inevitable (Kaynak et al., 1995).

Literature Review

A store card account represents a convenient open-ended transactional medium that charges no annual fees and provides interest free pre-approved revolving credit (Portrait Report, 2004). Store cardholders enjoy additional benefits such as discounts that may appear more rewarding than the credit facility itself (Benavent et al., 2004). Most store cards provide access to consolidated stores where customers might have been hesitant to apply for credit in the first place (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1985 in Holt, 1995) and because store cards are used by consumers over the whole socio economic spectrum, they pose no social threat at point of sale (Shallat, 2006).

Research however indicates that store cards encourage lavish spending: store cardholders admit that they spend larger amounts per shopping trip because the facility diminishes financial limitations amidst increased desirability (Hirschman, 2001). This facility consequently contributes to an increase in debt (Evans and Schmalensee, 2005).

Consumers’ satisfaction with store cards can apparently not be deduced from the number of store cards owned, frequency of use or ongoing use of the facility because many store cardholders continue to use them because they simply cannot afford to settle their accounts (Shallat, 2006).

Objective of the research

This research compares the reasons for the adoption of store cards and the consequent buyer behaviour of two groups of store cardholders that differ with regard to exposure and experience with the facility.

Methodology

An explorative approach, directed by deducto hypothetico method was applied to cross sectional data. A pre-tested structured questionnaire consisting of five sections was used. Data was collected during the third term of 2006 in Botswana in Gabarone and Francistown (sample B) where store cards were tested structured questionnaire consisting of five sections was used. A total of 267 questionnaires (B:100; RSA:167) were completed by 208 female (B:71; RSA:137) and 59 male respondents (B:29; RSA:30). Nobody in the less experienced sample B, held more than one store card while the majority of sample RSA possessed four or more different store cards.

Eleven possible reasons for the adoption of store cards were listed for prioritization and an open-ended opportunity was provided to indicate additional factors (Zywicki, 1996; Fianu et al. 1998; Durkin, 2002; Portrait Report, 2004). Responses were compared through chi square analysis and presented in a two by three contingency table: sample B considered the financial advantages of store card accounts (p=0.0001) as well as the social advantages of store card use (p=0.0019) significantly more important than their counterpart. Both samples appreciated store cards as a convenient substitute for cash and cheques (p=0.1173); preferred it as a secure payment method (p=0.2087) and they were indifferent about additional advantages such as club membership (p=0.3976) and rewards such as discounts that are involved (p=0.1004). A significant larger percentage of sample B acknowledged the persuasive influence of salespeople in their decision to adopt a store card (p=0.0278).

Indications are that less experienced store cardholders are significantly more inclined to overspend (B: 55.0%; RSA: 47.0%) (p=0.01). Installments thus increased for 42% of sample B during the preceding year (RSA: 27.5%). Open-ended questions revealed that impulsive buying (B: 52.4%; RSA: 53.3%) and poor planning (B: 23.8%; RSA: 10.9%) were mostly to blame for this. Not surprisingly, 57% of sample B (RSA: 4.2%) admitted that they struggled to honor monthly installments. Despite store cards' commendable benefit of interest free credit over six months, only 19% of sample B used that payment option (RSA: 59.9%). The rest distributed their installments over twelve months that included interest, or paid “whenever they could afford to do so”.

Factor analysis was done to determine whether store cardholders’ satisfaction with store cards related to specific attributes of store cards. Responses of the combined samples (N=267) to a list of 15 store card attributes were subjected to factor analysis using squared multiple correlations as initial communality estimates with direct oblimin rotation. Three constructs were identified, i.e.: ADDITIONAL INCENTIVES, FINANCIAL BENEFITS and CONVENIENCE. ANOVA indicated that sample RSA was significantly more satisfied with store cards as a commodity than sample B (p=0.0045). Although installment status did not affect respondents’ satisfaction judgment significantly, additional benefits associated with store cards caused a significant negative judgment by sample B (p=0.0001). They indicated that they were not fully informed about it. Although use of store cards rather than cash significantly increased respondents’ satisfaction with store cards (p<0.0001), the more experienced sample RSA was significantly more satisfied with the convenience attribute of store card use than sample B (p=0.0027).

Conclusion

Findings indicate that store cardholders’ evaluation of store cards is affected by exposure and previous experience with store cards. While experienced store cardholders were more impressed...
by convenience attributes, less experienced cardholders were significantly more impressed by financial benefits and the potential social value of store card ownership. Despite evidence of increasing debt and problems to maintain store card accounts, both samples willingly recommended store cards as a utility. Within a system’s perspective (Spears and Gregoire, 2003), it can be explained that respondents’ satisfaction with store cards culminates as an evaluation of all of the attributes of the commodity. Financial problems and a negative evaluation of additional benefits are thus probably negated by the positive attributes of store cards.

A positive evaluation of store cards by both samples and the number of store cards possessed by the more experienced sample suggest that store cards have come to stay as part of an anticipated future “cashless society”. Of particular concern however, is the inclination of less experienced store cardholders to overspend and the percentage of them that was “heavy revolvers” (i.e. cardholders who extended the payment option to the maximum) who had to face the burden of interest. The consequent challenge to retailers would be to exercise greater caution when they issue store cards and to monitor store cardholders’ installment status.

References


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Imagine you are at a restaurant, deciding whether to order chocolate cake for dessert. However, before you place your order, the waiter informs you that the lemon meringue, a dessert item you were not aware of and hence had not considered, is no longer available. This scenario illustrates a common situation in which customers, in the process of making a decision, become aware that other options, which they previously had not considered, are no longer available.

Prior research has documented the generally negative consequences of out-of-stock (OOS) options, including those related to consumer responses to the OOS options themselves (e.g., Campo, Gijsbrechts, and Nisol 2000), the store (e.g., Shary and Christopher 1979), retailers’ financial outcomes (e.g., Sloat, Verhoef, and Franses 2005), or the shopping experience (e.g., Fitzsimons 2000). For example, Fitzsimons (2000) showed that consumers were less satisfied with the shopping experience and were more likely to switch stores when an attractive option was out of stock. However, extant research on consumer reactions to purchase situations with OOS options has been limited to those in which it is the focal option that is unavailable—that is, the option consumers are considering purchasing and hence are focused on in their purchase decision. Surprisingly, the literature is currently lacking an investigation into the effect of incidental, or previously unconsidered, OOS options on consumer preferences for focal options. That is, in the above scenarios, how will the incidental out-of-stock alternatives that are de facto irrelevant to consumer decisions to purchase the chocolate cake impact consumers’ preferences for these focal options?

A common view in economics proposes that when consumers evaluate an option, they tend to retrieve from memory their stable and coherent preferences, calculate its utility, and then make their purchase decision accordingly (e.g., Slovic 1995). Therefore, purchase likelihood of one option should not be affected by information irrelevant to the choice at hand, such as the presence of incidental OOS options. However, an alternative view of preferences suggests that individuals may not always have well-defined, coherent preferences to retrieve, but instead construct them when required (e.g., Bettman, Luce, and Payne 1998). Since the construction process is sensitive to contextual factors, options added to the decision context often impact preferences and subsequent choice (e.g., Doyle et al. 1999; Highhouse 1996; Huber, Payne, and Puto 1982; Park and Kim 2005). For example, adding an asymmetrically dominated decoy option to a choice set tends to increase the choice share of the dominating alternative (Huber et al. 1982), even when the decoy is a phantom alternative, unavailable at the time of choice (Farquhar and Pratkanis 1987; Pratkanis and Farquhar 1992).

The current research builds on and extends these prior findings in the literature by showing that unavailable options may not only call attention to dominance relationships, giving rise to context effects in choice, but also have a robust influence on consumer judgments. In particular, we propose that OOS options impact purchase likelihood ratings of target options, and that this effect is based on the ease of justification they provide for choice of the target. Specifically, research has shown that when consumers expect to justify choices they are about to make, the focus of their decision process tends to shift from the choice of good options to the choice of good reasons, increasing purchase likelihood of options that are more easily justifiable (e.g., Shafir, Simonson, and Tversky 1993; Simonson 1989; Simonson and Nowlis 2000). Importantly, even irrelevant reasons can influence preferences and choice. For example, Simonson, Nowlis, and Simonson (1993) show that consumers are less likely to choose an option when exposed to other consumers’ idiosyncratic, irrelevant reasons its choice. Further support for the role of justification ease is provided by Park and Kim (2005), who propose that asymmetrically dominated decoys may influence preferences because find they may provide reasons for choice of the target option.

We show in a series of studies with several hundred subjects in a variety of product categories that the presence of an incidental, irrelevant OOS option has a robust effect on consumer preferences and, more specifically, significantly increases purchase likelihood of those options consumers are evaluating for purchase.

We further find that increases in purchase likelihood are not driven by incidental OOS options’ signaling impending scarcity for target options or by consumer reactance (Brehm 1966). Instead, and in line with prior findings on the constructive nature of preferences (e.g. Bettman, Luce, and Payne 1998) and specifically, reason-based choice (e.g., Simonson 1989), our results suggest that changes in purchase likelihood occur because incidental OOS options help justify choices of target options. Additionally, we report a boundary condition of the effect, showing that increases in purchase likelihood of target options is limited to consumers for whom incidental out-of-stock options make the purchase decision less difficult.

The present research therefore makes several key contributions to the marketing literature and practice. Specifically, we show that the impact of unavailable options on preferences is even stronger and may occur in a greater variety of circumstances than previously demonstrated. That is, not only do unavailable options, such as decoys or phantom alternatives, call attention to dominance relationships, but our results suggest that they also have a robust effect on judgment tasks, such as purchase likelihood ratings.

Our findings furthermore propose a relatively easy tool for retailers to increase purchase intentions for consumers who feel ambivalent toward the selection of a particular product and who require additional reasons to justify its purchase. That is, by mentioning the unavailability of another item, even one from an unrelated product category, is likely to increase the likelihood of purchase for the target option. However, future research is needed to investigate the consequences of a purchase based on irrelevant reasons. For example, what would be the impact on performance expectations and satisfaction with the product, both in case of performance success and failure?

References


Attentional Contrast During Sequential Judgments: A Source of the Number-of-Levels Effect
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Normatively, people should be sensitive to changes in the range of attribute levels, but not to changes in the number of attribute levels within a specific range. Yet, several studies from the conjoint literature show that derived importance weights increase with increases in the number of attribute levels, range held constant (e.g., Currim, Weinberg, and Wittink 1981).

In searching for methods to control for the number-of-levels effect, several accounts of the effect have been offered. First, it has been proposed that the number-of-levels effect is related to the data collection method, the measurement scale for the dependent variable, and the parameter estimation procedure. Although tests of these methodological factors and psychological accounts have allowed researchers to reduce the size of the number-of-levels effect, no methodological adjustment has completely eliminated the bias. Second, researchers have acknowledged that the effect could be a consequence of attentional processes. More specifically, it is proposed that respondents may assign more weight to attributes with more levels because novel attribute levels draw attention or because more attribute levels results in a level changing more frequently across profiles. These accounts rely on non-relational directed attention because the number-of-levels effect for one attribute is predicted to be independent of the number of levels of the other attributes (e.g., moving from a 2x2 design to a 4x4 design will increase the absolute importance of both attributes). Several studies have included one or more tests of non-relational directed attention, but have failed to find support for the hypothesis.

Since methodological factors and psychological accounts based on non-relational directed attention cannot fully account for the number-of-levels effect, there may be other sources of the number-of-levels effect. We propose that one such source is attentional contrast—attention directed towards relatively more novel attribute levels in sequential judgments, reflected in attribute importance. The attentional contrast account predicts that people direct attention away from attribute levels they have seen more often and towards attribute levels they have seen less often. For example, in a 4x2 design, the first attribute has four levels and each of these levels will be experienced twice in a full-factorial design. The second attribute has two levels and each of these levels will be experienced four times in a full-factorial design. Thus, within a profile, the levels of the first attribute will be relatively more novel than the levels of the second attribute. Attention will contrast away from the more common levels of attribute two and toward the less common levels of attribute one. This relational directed attention explanation differs from non-relational directed attention explanations in that the novelty of an attribute level depends on the number of levels of the other attributes in the design.

The proposed attentional contrast explanation is consistent with two observations from the number-of-levels effect literature. First, the number-of-levels effect is more likely to be obtained using a decompositional method than a compositional method. A decompositional method asks respondents to provide multiattribute judgments for the full-profile descriptions of alternatives. In a decompositional method, attribute levels are repeated across profiles but the repetition may not be uniform. The differential repetition of the levels of the attributes allows attentional contrast to operate within a profile. Compositional methods ask respondents to assign values to each level of an attribute. The values are combined to construct an overall evaluation of an alternative. In a compositional method, each level of an attribute is repeated only once and it is repeated out of context, so attentional contrast cannot operate.

Our second observation is that the designs used in studies of the number-of-levels effect invariably compare conditions in which the number of levels of more than one attribute is varied concurrently (i.e., varying the number of levels of attribute 1 is confounded with varying the number of levels of attribute 2). For example, consider an experiment in which participants respond to a 2x4 design (i.e., attribute 1 has two levels and attribute 2 has four levels) or a 4x2 design. If one finds that the derived importance weight on attribute 1 is larger in the 4x2 condition than in the 2x4 condition, then the weight difference may be due to the increased number of levels of attribute 1 (i.e., absolute novelty of the levels of attribute 1) or to the accompanying decrease in the number of levels of attribute 2 (i.e., relative novelty of the levels of attribute 1). In other words, the number-of-levels effect may not be caused (solely) by the increased number of levels of an attribute. It may also be caused by the reduced number of levels of other attributes in the experimental design. It is important to note that all published demonstrations of the number-of-levels effect concurrently vary the levels of two or more attributes.

Three experiments, each using three designs, examined whether attentional contrast contributes to the number-of-levels effect. These designs were investigated using a full profile task with reservation prices as the dependent variable and an ANOVA analysis technique. In experiment 1, we show that the number-of-levels effect occurs only when one attribute has more levels than a second attribute (i.e., a relative novelty effect). In experiment 2, we manipulate the relative novelty of an attribute’s levels and produce a “number-of-levels effect” when both attributes have the same (absolute) number of levels. In experiment 3, we use a design in which the levels associated with an attribute having fewer levels are made relatively more novel than levels associated with an attribute having more levels and obtain the “number-of-levels effect” on the attribute having fewer (absolute) levels. The results of the three studies show that the relative novelty of attribute levels contributes to the number-of-levels effect.

References


What’s Wrong With Having Too Much Fun?: The Moderating Role of Arousal in the Influence of Positive Mood on Self-Control
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research investigating the effect of mood on self-regulation has generated considerable interest (Andrade 2005; Bakamitsos 2006; Fishbach and Labroo 2007; Labroo and Patrick 2007). It is well-established that negative mood often results in breakdowns in self-control (Leith and Baumeister 1996; Tice, Bratslavsky, and Baumeister 2001). The role of positive mood, however, is somewhat more ambiguous. There is no consensus in the literature about the influence of positive mood on self-regulation (Aspinwall 1998). While there appears to be more evidence suggesting that positive mood may enhance self-control, there is some evidence in the literature indicating that this is not always the case. We propose a theoretical explanation that helps clarify the influence of positive mood on self-control by demonstrating the moderating role of arousal.

Recent research (Andrade 2005; Aspinwall 1998; Fishbach and Labroo 2007; Raghunathan and Trope 2002) suggests that positive mood, in general, facilitates the adoption of self-regulatory goals and results in long term success trumping short term pleasure, an outcome consistent with affect regulation. For affect regulation to operate, consumers must be able to assess their current feelings and their future feelings and focus on the direction of the difference in making their choice (Andrade 2005), a process that requires cognitive resources (Shiv and Fedorikhin 1999, 2002). Thus, the central thesis of this research is that elevated arousal interferes with or attenuates the strategic focus of positive mood due to the depletion of cognitive resources needed to consciously regulate behavior.

To investigate this issue we present a series of three studies. In all three studies we examine self-control not only in terms of consumer choice between two snack items, one of which is more desirable, sinful, tempting, and harder to resist to consume (M&M’s) than the other (grapes), but also in terms of the quantity consumed (monitoring the number of M&Ms consumed, having made the choice to eat M&Ms).

We demonstrate in study 1 that for consumers in a positive mood, the ability to exert self-control and choose a healthy option is determined by the level of arousal of the positive mood. Consistent with the theorizing, participants in a low-arousal positive mood were more likely to exercise self-control and choose a less sinful option than participants in the neutral valence condition. Also, having made a sinful choice, participants in the low-arousal positive valence condition were better able to regulate the quantity of the item consumed, eating fewer M&Ms than those in the neutral-valence condition. The facilitating effect of positive mood on self-control was not observed in the elevated-arousal conditions.

Study 2 focuses on the process underlying the effects observed in Study 1. The study was designed to illustrate that the elevated arousal that accompanies positive mood depletes the cognitive resources needed for strategic choice and consumption. Under low cognitive load, we replicated the results of Study 1 by showing that positive mood reduces choice and consumption of relatively more sinful and impulsive option in the low-arousal conditions, but not in the elevated-arousal conditions. In the low cognitive load-low arousal conditions, positive valence participants reported more thoughts while choosing the snack, were more likely to mention health or long-term consequences of the choice in their thought protocols, and were more likely to display overall long-term focus in their thoughts, compared to the neutral valence participants. This evidence indicates that low-arousal positive mood facilitates self-control through more thorough processing of information and more focus on the long-term effects of one’s decisions.

Study 2 also provides important evidence on the effect of the arousal dimension of mood on the self-control. High cognitive load conditions showed results very similar to the elevated-arousal–low load conditions, suggesting that elevated-arousal constrains cognitive resources, similar to cognitive load. Thought protocols provide further support for this mechanism, showing a smaller number of thoughts and words reported under elevated versus low-arousal. Notably in the first two studies valence and arousal of the mood state were manipulated simultaneously by using video episodes.

Study 3 replicates the previous findings but also expands on these studies to manipulate valence and arousal by two independent mechanisms: videos for valence and mild physical exercise in the form of stepping up and down an aerobic stool for arousal. We also used a puzzle solving task, known to be affected by a limitation of cognitive resources, to demonstrate the cognitive depletion that accompanies elevated arousal. As expected, compared to low arousal, elevated arousal participants solved fewer puzzles but took longer to solve them. Also, positive valence low-arousal participants solved more puzzles than those in the low-arousal neutral valence condition, but in the elevated-arousal conditions, positive mood participants solved as many puzzles as neutral mood ones. The puzzles results confirm that arousal takes away cognitive resources that could be used for self-control and confirm that low-arousal positive mood makes people more careful systematic processors of information.

In sum, this research relies on the basic predictions of the mood regulation route (Andrade, 2005) and augments it by integrating the role of arousal. We thus demonstrate the moderating role of arousal in the influence of positive mood on self-regulation of choice and consumption.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In health campaigns, a fear-relief appeal is often used. This message starts with focusing on negative consequences of a risk behavior and ends with offering a solution via behavioral recommendations (Hale and Dillard 1995). However, due to mixed results, there is a lot of discussion about its overall effectiveness (Witte and Allen 2000). It is often suggested that a valuable contribution could result from adopting a segmentation approach in which individual differences are taken into account. However, meta-analyses concluded that no true valuable moderator is identified yet (Witte and Allen 2000). We would like to contribute to this field by investigating the role of people’s goals and motives for health message design.

According to a recent motivation theory, the self-regulatory focus theory of Higgins (1997), there are two different basic motivational systems that regulate human behavior, namely (1) a promotion focus and (2) a prevention focus. These two foci have a significant impact on the type of goals that we pursue, the typical strategies that we follow and specific emotional vulnerabilities (Higgins 1997; Higgins, Shah, and Friedman 1997). Studies building further on this theory have also found evidence for a matching principle in the evaluation of stimuli (Pham and Higgins 2005). Specifically, in case of a match versus a mismatch between a stimulus and a recipient in terms of the self-regulatory focus (SRF), the stimulus will be evaluated as more valuable, a principle referred to as regulatory relevancy (Higgins 2002).

In consumer settings, compatible stimuli have been mainly developed in terms of verbal, objective product information (e.g., descriptions of luxurious versus reliable products (Safer 1998)). Knowing that consumers’ affective considerations could also be important for decision-making, such as in the health domain (Lawton, Conner, and Parker 2007) and that a strong link between the SRF and specific emotional vulnerabilities exists (Higgins et al. 1997), we would like to examine the validity of the regulatory relevancy principle further by matching the emotional tone of health messages to the motivational profile of the audience. Now, Pham and Avnet (2004) have also shown that promotion people have the tendency to rely more on affect than prevention people, but we expected that by including emotions compatible with the prevention focus in the stimuli, which has not been done before, affect could work for prevention people as well. Specifically, we expected that promotion people would consider dejection-cheerfulness ads to be more valuable than agitation-quiescence ads, whereas the reverse would be true for prevention people.

However, when studying the effectiveness of emotional stimuli, it is also crucial to consider the other main variables determining reliance on affect. So, in our study, we also took into account the perceived relevance of affect for the topic at hand to examine when the hypothesized emotion-congruence effects in both foci could be found (Pham 1998). Considering interaction effects between traits and situational factors is an issue under investigation in different domains (Rusting 1998). Overall, previous studies have shown that while the activation of related constructs produces additive and stronger effects, unstable results are obtained when the activated constructs are opposing each other (Bargh et al. 1986). Therefore, we expected that stronger emotion-congruence effects in promotion people would be obtained when the topic was perceived as highly versus little affect-relevant, and this due to a stronger activated focus in the first context (Zhou and Pham 2004). For prevention people, we could only hypothesize the absence of emotion-congruence effects in case of a little affect-relevant context. In a highly affective context, unstable effects of emotional tone in prevention people were anticipated.

Via a between-subjects design, for which sun protection campaigns were developed, we examined the role of the chronic SRF and of the type of context (i.e., perceived affect relevance) in the effectiveness of different emotional tones for health campaigns (dejection-cheerfulness vs. agitation-quiescence). A pretest with 153 females confirmed that the stimuli reflected the intended emotional tone. To run the experiment, we set up an online survey. Via an appeal to participate on two websites of a media concern, we obtained data from 1386 women between the age of 24 and 38 years old. We first asked about tanning activities and then randomly assigned respondents to one of the health campaigns. A control group was included. Questions about attitudes and behavioral intentions followed. Finally, perceived affect relevance, the chronic SRF and socio demographics were measured.

As expected, we found that when promotion people considered affect to be highly versus little relevant in processing the sun protection ad, their focus was more strongly activated and stronger emotion-congruence effects emerged. In particular, promotion people were more persuaded by health ads with a dejection-cheerfulness tone than by the ones with an agitation-quiescence tone. Although results for prevention people were not in contrast to the proposed hypothesis, we also did not firmly hypothesize them. Specifically, emotion-incongruence effects on relevancy measures emerged: prevention people scored the incongruent dejection-cheerfulness higher than the congruent agitation-quiescence appeals. Other types of processing, such as heuristic (e.g., an incongruent versus a congruent ad is more “catchy” (Petty and Cacioppo 1986)) or motivated processing (e.g., a typical versus atypical ad is more obviously trying to persuade and is, therefore, less credible (Friestad and Wright 1994)) could be responsible, but validation is needed. In case of a highly affective context, we did not find emotion-congruence effects in prevention such as in promotion people. However, in a more ego-involving situation, reflected in a highly frequent use of sun beds, an emotion-congruency trend appeared. This indicates that emotional appeals could also be used as relevant information by prevention people, but only in situations where affective involvement is also real and highly personal.

In sum, our findings complement those of Pham and Avnet (2004) in that prevention people generally less on affect than promotion people, but that this should not always be the case, especially not in “extreme” contexts. Also, health practitioners could use these results when designing campaigns for specific health topics (especially highly affective ones) and/or for specific audiences defined in terms of their SRF.

References


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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

A growing body of literature in psychology and consumer behavior demonstrates the effectiveness of a psychological phenomenon, called the self-prophecy effect, as a behavior modification technique. The self-prophecy effect entails the fact that simply requesting people to make a prediction about future behavior may cause a behavior change in social normative directions. The self-prophecy effect consists of two main stages. In a first stage, an individual is asked to make a self-prediction about the future performance of a particular behavior under social-normative control. Since people like to present themselves as socially correct, they tend to overpredict the degree to which their future behavior will be in line with social norms. The second stage of the effect entails the finding that this misprediction has real consequences for the performance of the behavior. People, that made a self-prediction, tend to act in accordance with the prediction they made (Sherman 1980). This effect has not only been shown in experimental settings, but it also appears to hold in numerous important ‘real life’ settings. For example, Obermiller and Spangenberg (2000) applied the self-prophecy technique to fundraising. By asking people to predict whether or not they would donate money, they were able to increase the donation success rate from 30.4% to 49%. Spangenberg (1997) showed that this self-prophecy effect also persists in a health club attendance context. Hence, given that this self-prophecy effect has been consistently demonstrated to influence human behavior and that the phenomenon has important real-world applications, the technique requests for further investigation. All the more because, compared to other methods, the self-prophecy approach is relatively simple and easy to implement. It was acknowledged by Sprott et al. (2006) that a wide variety of institutions and organizations could benefit from this social influence technique. Furthermore, the exploration of factors influencing the magnitude of the self-prophecy effect may also be of great importance for those interested in learning more about the theoretical underpinnings of the self-prophecy effect (Sprott et al. 2006).

Hence, even though the behavioral change after answering a question can be fairly large, from a theoretical and social marketing point of view it would be interesting to identify conditions that have an impact on the magnitude of the behavioral change.

Hence, it is the hallmark of this research to identify conditions that can increase the effectiveness of making self-predictions to influence the performance of social normative behaviors, by examining the effect of making a particular sequence of self-predictions on subsequent changes in behavior. Hence, it is the goal of this study to examine the magnitude of the self-prophecy effect by inducing participants to make a particular sequence of self-predictions.

It has been shown in the ‘multiple request compliance strategy’ literature (concerning the foot-in-the-door and door-in-the-face technique), that compliance with a request can be increased, in certain situations, by either preceding the target request with either a more or a less demanding request (Freedman and Fraser 1966). Fern, Monroe and Avila (1986) identified a number of factors that determine whether a foot-in-the-door or door-in-the-face set-up is most appropriate to generate compliance, departing from the availability explanation (the main theoretical framework underlying both multiple request compliance strategies). With respect to the foot-in-the-door technique, Fern et al. (1986) found that the chance of compliance with a critical request rose when the initial request was substantial, the initial request behavior was performed rather than agreed upon and a different requester made the critical request. With respect to the door-in-the-face technique, the opposite was suggested.

By incorporating this knowledge on multiple request techniques into the self-prophecy literature, we put forward hypotheses on the possible effects of preceding the ‘target self-prophecy request’ with a ‘small self-prophecy request’ or a ‘large self-prophecy request’. Hereby, it is important to note that the current research was conducted in an on-line setting and therefore no researcher was physically present in the research setting. This experimental set-up, favors a ‘small-target’ sequence over a ‘large-target’ sequence in generating mispredictions, according to the availability theory. Therefore, based on this availability explanation, we hypothesized that the sequence of a small and target self-prediction request would lead to a more extreme misprediction and subsequent change in behavior than the misprediction and subsequent change in behavior in the ‘target prediction request-only’ condition. This first hypothesis, regarding the degree of misprediction, could be confirmed by our analysis (Wald=7.73, p=0.005). The difference in the subsequent change in behavior appeared to be only marginally significant (Wald=3.076, p=0.079).

For the sequence ‘large-target’ we did not expect an increased misprediction, and therefore we also did not expect an increased behavior change compared to the ‘target prediction request-only’ condition. These two hypotheses could also be confirmed. These results indicate that it might be beneficial to incorporate either a highly demanding or a less demanding self-prophecy request, dependent on the particular the situation, before the actual target self-prediction request in order to attain a higher level of behavior change in social normative directions.

References


Consumer Animosity: A Within-Nation Study of Arab and Jewish Israelis’ Attitudes toward Foreign Goods
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
This study examines the influence of animosity on the evaluation of foreign products across subcultures. Previous studies have focused primarily on animosity across nations (e.g., Ettensen and Klein 2005; Klein and Ettensen 1999; Witkowski 2000). Recent studies have begun to examine animosity between two subcultures (Hinck 2004; Shimp et al. 2004; Shoham et al. 2006), all of these studies, however, have focused exclusively on domestic products and neglected attitudes toward foreign products and nations. The current study addresses this issue by examining the animosity levels of two subcultures (Arab and Jewish Israelis) toward the UK and Italy and their attitudes toward British and Italian goods. It contributes to the literature by examining the attitudes of two distinct subcultures, highlighting the importance of subculture in consumer animosity, and evaluating the impact of subgroup attitudes on product judgments and willingness to buy products from foreign nations.

The specific context chosen for this study was the nation of Israel. Israel has two distinct ethnic subcultures (Jewish and Arab Israelis) with diverging attitudes toward various nations.

Two specific target nations, the United Kingdom and Italy, were chosen as the foci of animosity. The United Kingdom was chosen because of its historical role in the Middle East, its recent support for the Iraqi war, and the potential for differences in attitudes across Arab and Jewish subgroups. Italy was chosen as a benchmark, with relatively favorable attitudes expected (and identified in a pretest) for both subgroups. Political and regional tensions in the Middle East provide a relatively strong context for this study.

Data for this study was collected from shopping and community centers in Israel catering to middle-class neighborhoods. There are 112 usable questionnaires from Arab Israeli consumers and 111 usable questionnaires from Jewish Israeli consumers, a response rate of 86.2% and 95.7% respectively. The samples were 58.9% male and 41.1% female for Arab Israelis, and 42.3% male and 57.7% female for Jewish Israelis. Both groups generally reported having some college without a degree, an average of two children, and a modal age of between 31 and 35 years old. The income for the Arab and Jewish Israeli samples, respectively, were 40.2% and 46.9% for below average [NIS9,000 [US$2,000]], 44.6% and 36.0% at national average [NIS9,000-NIS15,000 [US$2,000-US$3,333]], and 15.2% and 17.1% for above average (greater than NIS15,000 [US$3,333]) (Israel Bureau of Statistics 2002).

Multi-item measures were used to measure all constructs. Animosity measures feelings of hostility toward a nation (Klein et al. 1998). Consumer ethnocentrism measures the view of things in which one’s own group is the center of everything (Shimp and Sharma 1987). The product judgment scale measures the perceived quality and workmanship of a country’s products, while the willingness to buy scale measures the receptiveness of consumers to buying products from that country (Klein et al. 1998). The reliability coefficients for all these scales exceeded .70 for both groups.

The overall pattern of means generally reflected our intentions. Animosity was higher among Arab Israelis toward Britain than Jewish Israelis and levels of animosity toward Italy did not differ (as was intended).

The relationship between variables was examined next. Animosity was related to an unwillingness to buy across all four contexts. In other words, an individual’s feelings of animosity toward a nation decreased one’s willingness to buy goods from that nation regardless of the subculture examined (Arab or Jewish Israelis) or the target nation (the UK or Italy). Similar effects were observed for consumer ethnocentrism, which was related to both animosity and an unwillingness to buy products from both the UK and Italy. Thus, consistent with previous research (e.g., Ettensen and Klein 2005; Klein et al. 1998; Nijssen and Douglas 2004; Witkowski 2000), animosity and consumer ethnocentrism consistently contribute to unwillingness to buy at the individual level.

Other effects, in contrast, were context-specific and only observed when examining Arab Israelis’ animosity towards the UK. Animosity was highest among Arab Israelis toward this nation, which decreased product judgments of British products. These effects were not observed for Italian products or for Jewish Israelis’ assessments of British products. Thus, strong consumer sentiment can cloud product judgments within a specific subculture.

Animosity was strongest among Arab Israelis toward the UK and only in this context did animosity result in a derogation of product judgments. Arab Israelis may feel culturally and religiously connected to other Arabs in the Middle East and identify with other Arabs as an “in group.” This sense of kinship with fellow Arabs may contribute to feelings of hostility toward the UK and a perceived desire for justice for recent political tensions in the Middle East.

Consumer ethnocentrism, in contrast, produced an unwillingness to buy foreign products across all contexts. Levels of ethnocentrism, however, were unexpectedly higher among Jewish Israelis. Contrasting the findings across groups for the two target nations provides some interesting results. In the Italian context levels of animosity were similar and consumer ethnocentrism was the primary driver for both groups. Levels of animosity differed in relation to the UK, where animosity played a stronger role for Arab Israelis. These findings suggest that contrary to previous findings that separate product judgments from animosity (Ettensen and Klein 2005; Klein 2002; Klein and Ettensen 1999), strong levels of animosity can impact product judgments and contribute to an unwillingness to buy products from a specific nation. Thus, we find, contrary to previous research, that animosity can and does influence product judgments but only when it is high (as it is among Arab Israelis toward the UK).

In sum, this study extends previous research on consumer ethnocentrism and animosity to within-nation subcultures. It focuses on an ongoing and relatively strong context of animosity and explicitly tests for and finds moderation across subgroups. Important differences can and do occur between subcultures in their level of animosity toward other nations. Differences can also occur in the influence of animosity on product judgments and the willingness of...
a specific subculture to buy products from people and products associated with a particular nation.

References


Competent versus Warm Countries of Origin: The Influence of National Stereotypes on Product Perceptions
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
In this research, we propose that the differences in hedonic versus utilitarian product perceptions are driven by distinct dimensions of national stereotypes associated with a country of origin’s people.

There is evidence for consumers’ reliance on national stereotypes when evaluating products, suggesting that such schemas triggered by country-of-origin information set up expectations about product properties or features (e.g., Maheswaran 1994). For example, Leclerc, Schmitt, and Dubé (1994) showed that a French (vs. English) brand name or pronunciation activates properties associated with “Frenchness,” such as perceived aesthetic sensitivity and refined taste of France and the French, which result in consumers’ evaluating a perfume to be more hedonic.

However, while a large body of research has documented the importance of country-of-origin effects (e.g., Verlegh and Steenkamp 1999; Jaffe and Nebenzahl 2006), the literature is currently lacking an investigation into how systematic differences in the content of national stereotypes associated with a particular country of origin impact product perceptions and evaluations. This paper seeks to address this shortcoming. Since to the best of our knowledge this is the first study to investigate the differential effects of two distinct dimensions of national stereotypes on product perceptions, our objectives in this research are to document their importance, test a moderator of warmth versus competence perceptions, and suggest avenues for future research based on our findings.

Drawing on research concerning stereotype contents and, in particular, Fiske et al.’s (2002) Stereotype Content Model, we propose that the stereotypes consumers hold concerning a country’s perceived warmth versus competence affect the degree to which its products are perceived to be relatively more hedonic versus utilitarian. Our studies demonstrate the existence and the differential impact of distinct stereotype dimensions on product perceptions, the asymmetric impact of familiarity with a nation’s products on warmth versus competence perceptions, and the underlying mechanism for the influence of perceived competence on utilitarian product properties. Formally, we hypothesize and test:

H1: Products from countries high in competence (warmth) are perceived to be relatively more utilitarian (hedonic).

H2: Perceived competence (warmth) mediates the effect of country-of-origin on utilitarian (hedonic) product perceptions.

In study 1, following Fiske et al. (2002), U.S. subjects (N=95, undergraduate students) indicated how competent, capable, and efficient (competence index, α=86) and how warm, friendly, and good-natured (warmth index; α=90) they perceived Germans (Italians) to be, where 1=not much and 7=a lot. In particular, our subjects perceived Germans (Italians) to be significantly more competent (F[1, 91]=8.79, p<.01) than Germans (M=4.40). Further, subjects perceived Germans (M=5.51) to be significantly more competent (F[1, 91]=15.31, p<.001) than Italians (M=5.03). Interestingly, and extending previous work on the stereotype content model and national stereotypes, knowledge of or familiarity with a nation’s products moderated only differences in perceived warmth, but not in perceived competence.

In study 2, we show that a product made in Germany is perceived to be more utilitarian than the identical product made in Italy. As expected, U.S. subjects (N=123, undergraduate students) perceived Germans to be more competent than Italians [M=5.05 vs. 4.53, respectively; F(1, 121)=4.73, p<.05]. Conversely, they perceived Italians to be warmer than Germans [M=5.02 vs. 4.35, respectively, F(1, 121)=11.64, p<.001]. Importantly, however, and consistent with our hypothesis, subjects rated the German (vs. Italian) bike significantly more utilitarian [M=4.41 vs. 3.81; F(1, 121)=4.18, p<.05].

Subsequently, we tested if perceived competence mediated the relationship between country of origin and perceived utilitarianism, using the procedure suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986). As discussed above, country of origin was a significant predictor of perceived utilitarianism (B=0.603, t=2.04, p<.05) and perceived competence (B=0.458, t=2.16, p<.05). Next, perceived competence had a significant effect on perceived utilitarianism of the bicycle (B=0.367, t=3.01, p<.01). Lastly, when both country of origin and perceived competence were included in the regression, perceived competence remained a significant predictor (B=0.33, t=2.68, p<.01), while country of origin became insignificant (B=0.452, t=1.54, p>.10), providing evidence for complete mediation.

In study 3, a product made in Italy was perceived to be more hedonic than the identical product made in Germany. As predicted, Japanese subjects (N=49, undergraduate students) rated the German (vs. Italian) bike significantly more utilitarian [M=5.52 vs. 4.04, F(1, 45)=14.84, p<.01], replicating the results of the U.S. study. Furthermore, subjects rated the Italian (vs. German) bike significantly more hedonic [M=4.60 vs. 3.52; F(1, 45)=5.41, p<.05]. Additionally, they also perceived Germans to be more competent than Italians [M=5.01 vs. 3.58, respectively; F(1, 45)=31.09, p<.001]. Surprisingly, there were no differences in perceived warmth between Germans and Italians (M=4.26 and 4.28, respectively; F<1).

Testing for mediation effects, country of origin was a significant predictor of perceived utilitarianism (B=1.48, t=3.65, p<.01) and perceived competence (B=1.42, t=5.61, p<.01). Next, perceived competence had a significant effect on perceived utilitarianism (B=0.685, t=3.84, p<.01). Lastly, when both country of origin and perceived competence were included in the regression, perceived competence remained significant (B=0.447, t=1.97, p<.055), while country of origin became insignificant (B=0.847, t=1.66, p>.10), providing proof for complete mediation, and replicating the results of the previous study.

A series of studies introduced the stereotype content model (Fiske et al. 2002) and its two distinct national stereotype dimensions of perceived warmth versus competence to the consumer behavior literature. We furthermore found that knowledge of a country’s products impacted differences in perceived warmth but not in perceived competence. Notably, we demonstrated the effect of a country’s perceived warmth versus competence on hedonic versus utilitarian product perceptions. In particular, we showed that a product made in Germany was perceived to be more utilitarian.
than the identical product made in Italy. Additionally, a product made in Italy was perceived to be more hedonic than the identical product made in Germany. Importantly, mediational analyses found that greater perceived competence of Germans (vs. Italians) was driving the effect of a product’s country of origin and its perceived degree of utilitarianism.

While our experiments supported the hypothesized relationship between national stereotype contents of perceived competence and the perceived utilitarianism of products associated with a nation, we were not able to test for the mediational role played by perceived warmth on a product’s perceived hedonism. Future research should therefore generalize the effect to other nations that differ in how warm their citizens are perceived to be.

Additional research could confirm the psychometric properties of the perceived competence and warmth scales as well as measure perceived utilitarianism and hedonism using multiple item scales (Voss et al. 2003). Further studies could explore the effectiveness of marketing communications (i.e., themes, symbols, models and endorsers, etc.) in shaping consumers’ views of a country. The roles of country versus product familiarity and their interaction effects should be further delineated. Finally, it would be interesting to further examine the dynamic nature of the relationship between national stereotypes and COO-based product evaluations over time.

References


Antecedents and Consequences of Customer Loyalty: An Empirical Synthesis and Reexamination
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Customer loyalty is a consumer’s commitment to a certain brand/service, and preference to buy it, given the choice of alternative brands/services. By creating and maintaining customer loyalty, a company develops a long-term, mutually beneficial relationship with the customers. Since customer loyalty is a company’s most enduring assets, corporate executives are interested in fundamental questions concerning the concept of customer loyalty, e.g., the driving forces of customer loyal behavior, and the impact of customer loyalty on the financial performance of firms. The practical and conceptual importance of this topic has been underscored by the substantial volume of studies published in leading academic journals. However, despite the importance of customer loyalty, no comprehensive work has been advanced to assess the general findings across academic studies. We seek to fill that void by conducting a meta-analysis of empirical findings on the predictors and outcomes of customer loyalty. The purpose of the study is three-fold. First, we seek to reconcile the inconsistent findings and establish the generalizability of the relationships between customer loyalty and its important correlates. Second, built upon the findings of this meta-analysis, we present some important predictor and criterion variables from a traditional retailing perspective. Third, research on customer loyalty has been conducted in various methodological contexts, yet no attempt has been made to evaluate the robustness of effects across study conditions. Here, we attempt to explain differences in the results of previous studies by investigating a number of study characteristics (e.g., loyalty toward tangible vs. intangible products, attitudinal vs. behavioral loyalty measures, single vs. multiple scales) that could moderate the study effects.

In this study, we integrate findings from prior research and model the antecedents and consequences of loyalty as expressed by indicators of repurchase behavior and/or intention. Our theoretical framework categorizes two types of antecedents to customer loyalty—customer- (e.g., customer satisfaction, trust, psychological commitment) and product-related factors (e.g., perceived value, product/service quality, switching costs, brand reputation, perceived fairness). We also assess the effect of customer loyalty on one performance outcome variable—market share. Further, as we believe intangibility of products and loyalty measurement types are crucial in moderating the relationships between loyalty and its correlates, we examine the effect sizes of these moderators.

Based on integrated results from 70 individual studies, our study suggests that affective loyalty (e.g., the extent to which a customer prefers a band or how consistently favorable her attitude towards the brand is) often proves to be a plausible predictor of behavioral loyalty (e.g., a customer’s repeat purchase behavior or repurchase intention). The distinction between behavioral and attitudinal loyalty measurement does not lead to any significant difference in six of the seven relationships examined (i.e., customer satisfaction→loyalty, commitment→loyalty, perceived value→loyalty, product/service quality→loyalty, brand reputation→loyalty, loyalty→market share). However, it does affect the correlation between perceived fairness and loyalty. In particular, the use of attitudinal measures can noticeably deflate the effect size. In addition, our results detect consistently weaker effects from studies using single-item loyalty measures. Finally, we do not detect any strong moderating effect of loyalty type (i.e., intangibility of the product) on the studied relationships. The magnitude of customer loyalty does not seem to differ much, in the contexts of tangible products as opposed to intangible services.

Although the findings of this study support all the hypothesized relationships, they indicate stronger effect sizes for trust, perceived value, perceived fairness, and product/service quality than for switching costs, psychological commitment, brand reputation, and general customer satisfaction.

The proposed study has implications for retailing research and practice. By pinpointing the key variables that relate to consumer loyalty, the study investigates issues that are of great interest to retail managers. By testing a broad theoretical typology and a wide range of variables that pertain to loyalty, we gauge the current level of knowledge about consumer loyalty with a critical review of the empirical studies on this topic.
Consumption, Social Status and Distinction among Working Class Families
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The present paper seeks to understand and interpret the role of consumption in the construction and maintenance of the cultural identity of urban lower classes. Assuming that consumption patterns are the result of socio-cultural formative conditions, as well as the interaction imposed on individuals by their class position (Henry, 2002; Williams, 2002), which can operate as a consumption sub-culture where individuals share similar tastes which organise their actions (Holt, 1997), we tried to have a better understanding on how individuals belonging to the lower strata of the Brazilian social hierarchy relate in their community and to the world through the acquisition and use of goods and services.

The option for ethnography as a methodological approach reflects the intention to verify the function of consumption in the logic of everyday relationships in a poor neighbourhood. This method was carried out not only as a way of collecting data, but also as means to clarify the ways in which a culture simultaneously constructs and is constructed by people’s behaviour and experiences (Arnould; Wallendorf, 1994). On the whole, six families were studied in five months and a half of fieldwork in a poor neighbourhood of a State capital in Brazil, which generated a huge amount of material that was analysed and interpreted.

Despite the external representation and the self-image of homogeneity among low income people in Brazilian urban areas, it was observed the existence of nuances among the members of the community studied, which led to a distinction of three different sub-classes: the ‘poor’, the ‘really poor’ and the ‘elite of the hill’. Three major elements structure the distinction among the hill dwellers: Firstly, the financial resources of individuals determine their possibilities of engaging in a process to improve living conditions, which includes an increase in the acquisition of consumer goods. Secondly, ‘knowing how to spend money’ seems to be central to the individuals surveyed once it means to be able to invest on the most valued goods, the ones that lend their owners some social distinction; and lastly, ‘where to spend money’ is another important element in this cultural structure is the network of relationships in the community. In conclusion, theses three structural elements of distinction are the mirror which establishes parameters for some sort of intra-classes distinctive mechanism.

In spite of the structural determining factors, it is the possession of goods and the consumption practices that effectively distinguish the poor from each other. Being able to ‘buy things’ can differentiate the ‘poor’ from the ‘really poor’. Some goods, such as a car, a house and its finishes, the 29 inches TV set, and the 29 inches TV set, are the mirror which establishes parameters for some sort of distinction, since people give the impression of being arrogant for their conspicuous consumption, at the same time that need and hunger are negated and the distinction from the very poor is established, also reaffirm the distinction from the ‘rich’, who eat little either to keep aesthetic principles or due to ‘arrogance’.

Due to close relationships among the hill dwellers, individuals are permanently in contact with each other, making it common practice to judge both their possessions and acts. In this context being polite, for example, is a kind of attitude that sets these individuals apart from those who are less satisfied with their social conditions and their dwellings. However, even the most polite individuals adopt practices that could be considered ‘excessive’, which seem to aim at reinforcing social identity, instead of being an instrument of distinction, since people give the impression of being aware of the association between poverty and excess. Last, contacts outside the community or with the ‘elite of the hill’ tend to be highly valued, in a set where having friends or acquaintances outside and between the most affluent hill dwellers means to have contact with coders of behaviour and influences that broaden the horizon, and help to keep distinctions inside the community.

The results show that the consumption of goods is a key element in the formation and the preservation of social identity in the urban poorer class. On the whole, the possession and consumption of consumer goods does not lead to social mobility, which the working classes know that is extremely difficult and improbable, but aim at improving their live conditions compared to their own standards. The distinctive logic applies mainly to others belonging to the same social class, where the neighbours, instead of the ‘rich’, are the mirror which establishes parameters for some sort of advancement that can be achievable and surpassed, being, for this very reason, a reality easier to endure. In addition, if consumption is incapable of removing cultural and social barriers between the working and the upper and middle classes, the results of this study show that it can even so be considered as a powerful intra-classes distinctive mechanism.

References


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Counterfeit goods, as opposed to pirated goods, are illegal, low-priced and often lower quality replicas of products that typically possess high brand value (Lai and Zaichkowsky 1999). The global market for counterfeit products today is estimated to exceed $600 billion, accounting for approximately 7% of world trade (World Customs Organization 2004). Interestingly, the anti-counterfeiting forces seem to be fighting a losing battle, particularly in luxury goods markets. Despite intensified anti-counterfeiting efforts by marketers of most major luxury brands, estimates suggest that this industry is losing as much as $12 billion every year to counterfeiting (International Chamber of Commerce 2004). Yet, while much research has focused on how to best control the supply of counterfeit goods (Penz and Stottinger 2005), a clear and actionable understanding of the motivations underlying consumers’ purchase of counterfeit luxury brands remains largely elusive.

Given that the market for counterfeit brands relies on consumers’ desire for real luxury brands (Penz and Stottinger 2005), extant insights into why people purchase luxury brands in the first place are particularly relevant to understanding the motives underlying counterfeit brand purchases. Luxury products are typically both well-crafted and cultivate a highly desirable image of exclusivity (Bearden and Etzel 1982). Much research suggests that, the quality of luxury brands notwithstanding, consumers typically consume such brands in the service of numerous important social goals (Grubb and Grathwohl 1967). The central premise of this paper is that these social motivations guide consumers’ propensity to consume counterfeit brands. Specifically, we draw on the functional theories of attitudes (Katz 1960; Smith et al. 1956) to propose that both consumers’ desire for counterfeit brands and the extent to which the availability of such counterfeits alters their preference for the real brands are determined by the social functions underlying their attitude towards luxury brands.

Functional theories of attitudes (Katz 1960; Smith et al. 1956) suggest that attitudes serve a number of psychological functions, such as helping people organize and structure their environment (the knowledge function) and maintain their self-esteem (the ego defense function). Attitudes also serve important social functions such as allowing self-expression (a value-expression function) and facilitating self-presentation (a social-adjustive function). Attitudes serving a social-adjustive function (i.e., social-adjustive attitudes) help people maintain relationships (DeBono 1987). When consumers have a social-adjustive attitude towards a product, they are motivated to consume it to gain approval in social situations. Attitudes serving a value-expression function (i.e., value-expressive attitudes), on the other hand, help people communicate their central beliefs, attitudes and values to others (Katz 1960). When consumers hold a value-expressive attitude towards a product, they are motivated to consume it as a form of self-expression (Snyder and DeBono 1985). Prior research suggests that consumers’ attitudes toward luxury brands may serve either a social-adjustive, a value-expression function or both (Shavitt 1989).

Research by Snyder and DeBono (1985) suggests that consumers respond more favorably to image or product form appeals when they hold attitudes serving a social-adjustive function because such appeals are consistent with their social goal of projecting a particular image in social settings. In contrast, consumers are more responsive to messages promoting intrinsic aspects of products such as quality or reliability when they hold attitudes serving a value-expression function because such messages are more readily interpretable in terms of their underlying values and dispositions. We expect these differences to carry over to luxury brand contexts as well: social-adjustive attitudes towards luxury brands will motivate consumers to consume such products for form or image related reasons whereas value-expressive attitudes towards luxury brands will motivate them to consume such products for product function or quality related reasons. Thus, compared to value-expressive attitudes, social-adjustive attitudes towards luxury brands should be associated with a higher preference for counterfeit brands because they are designed to look like luxury brands, but are often associated with lesser quality.

Notably, this does not imply that value-expressive attitudes will always be associated with counterfeit avoidance. Given that consumers holding such attitudes are guided by their desire to maximize the consistency between the products they consume and their central beliefs, attitudes and values (Snyder and DeBono 1985), their preference for counterfeit brands is also likely to vary with their values and beliefs regarding counterfeiting per se. In particular, a growing body of research (Tom et. al., 1998) suggests that consumers vary widely in their beliefs regarding the morality of counterfeit consumption (i.e., moral beliefs about counterfeit consumption). Thus, when consumers’ attitudes towards luxury brands serve a value-expression function, we expect their preference for counterfeits to be moderated by their moral beliefs about counterfeit consumption.

Through three studies, we demonstrate that consumers’ likelihood of buying a counterfeit brand is greater when their luxury brand attitudes serve a social-adjustive function rather than a value-expressive one. Perhaps more interesting, consumers’ moral beliefs about counterfeit consumption affects their likelihood of consuming a counterfeit brand only when their luxury brand attitudes serve a value-expression function. As well, exposure to a counterfeit brand has a stronger negative effect on consumers’ preference for the real brand when their luxury brand attitudes serve a social-adjustive function. In establishing these relationships, we demonstrate that the primary social function served by consumers’ luxury brand attitudes is not merely a consumer characteristic but can also be determined by elements of the marketing mix (e.g., product characteristics and advertisements). This points to the ability of marketers to influence people’s reactions to counterfeit brands through specific marketing mix actions.

References


**FILM FESTIVAL**
Russell Belk, York University, Canada
Robert Kozinets, York University, Canada

**SUMMARY**

The second Latin American ACR Film Festival was a great success, as judged by both the quality of the films accepted for the program and the number of people at the conference attending the showings of the films. It was also gratifying to see that while there were several films in the program by veteran filmmakers, the People’s Choice award-winning film was by first time filmmakers, João Pedro dos Santos Fleco, Carlos Alberto Vargas Rossi, and Nicolas Isao Tonsho, all of whom are Brazilian. The film, “VINILEIROS—Those Crazy Guys that Love Their Vinyl Records” is about a passionate type of consumption that has not previously been well explored in consumer research. Together with films on counterfeit consumption in Mexico, package narratives depicting Italian country of origin for various consumer goods, maternal deaths in Pakistan, Disney theme park consumption in Hong Kong, and gendered home spaces in Qatar, this year’s films were truly global. The film festival shows the power of visual and auditory media to make diverse cultures more familiar and at the same time to focus on some fundamental areas of consumption.

**ABSTRACTS**

“CUCCI OR GUCCI? Exploring the Counterfeiting Consumption On the U.S. and Mexico Border”
Sindy Chapa, Texas State University
Laura Servier, University of Texas of the Permian Basin

This video explores the perceptions of individuals who live on the U.S.-Mexico border toward counterfeiting consumption. In particular, the authors illustrate the case of “Nuevo Progreso,” Mexico. Nuevo Progreso is one of the most popular places on Mexico’s border to purchase counterfeit products. The counterfeiters, using fake trademarks, sell handbags, sunglasses, and T-shirts, among other products, not only to Mexicans, but also to Americans who live or visit the Mexico border.

Overall, this video demonstrate how the “accessibility,” “category,” and “origin” of the fake products help to understand the counterfeiting consumption and demand. Furthermore, this video shows how consumers’ “price,” “fashion,” and “brand consciousness” might play an important role in explaining this consumption.
“It all Began with a Kiss, or When Packages Sell a Country”

Maria Kniazeva, University of San Diego

If you like to read romantic stories, don’t rush to the library in search of the book. Instead, go to the supermarket and look for a box of chocolate candies under the name Baci, because this is where the romantic story is waiting for you. And this is why this videography approaches packaging as an important and under-researched cultural phenomenon. It introduces viewers to the poetry of packaging and takes them to the world of commercial storytelling that sells a product by selling its country of origin (COO). Analyzing narratives on food product packages that claim a connection to Italy, the author bridges together marketplace mythology and COO streams of research. Research objectives aim at understanding how a country mythologizing process prompts consumer geographic imagination. La Dolce Vita!

“A Right to Life”

Marylouise Caldwell, University of Sydney
Paul Henry, University of Sydney
Stephen Watson

A Right to Life highlights the complexities of empowering the citizen-consumer by implementing reform in the public obstetric/gynaecological health care sector of Pakistan. Every year approximately 30,000 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 (2005-2006), 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.
“Disney Dreams in China”

Eric Ping Hung Li, York University
Annamma Joy, University of British Columbia, Okanagan
Russell Belk, York University

This video documents how visitors to Hong Kong Disneyland interpret Disney Magic and construct the magical experience of the theme park. The dreaming created through Disney magic is found to be difficult to access in the compressed and crowded space of the current (first phase) park. The dream moment requires imaginative space that is made possible by traversing geographical space. The video explores the effect of “otherness” on the creation of fantasy. For young Asian adults one competing source of otherness is Japanese anime. For these young adults, Disney magic may be interesting, but Japanese anime is enthralling.

“VINILEIROS–Those Crazy Guys that Love Their Vinyl Records”

João Pedro dos Santos Fleck, PPGA/EA/UFRGS
Carlos Alberto Vargas Rossi PPGA/EA/UFRGS
Nicolas Isao Tonsho, EAUFRGS

How much is a record collection worth? Is it possible to complete a collection? What makes someone buy a vinyl record today and pay more for this big black vinyl record than for a small silver CD? Or just download for free the same music from the internet and listen to it on an MP3 Player? Until what level is it just consumption and when does it become the passion of an aficionado? Find the answers for these and other questions in VINILEIROS.
“Behind the Closed Doors: Gendered Home Spaces in a Gulf Arab State”

Russell Belk, York University
Rana Sobh, Qatar University

A Qatari architect in our study observed that a woman’s local dress consisting of abaya (the long black outer garment), shayla (an accompanying black head covering), and niqab (a black face veil covering all but her eyes) are the embodied extension of gendered spaces and restricted privacy in Qatari homes. That is, it provides a woman with a sense of private space that she carries with her in the public sphere and safeguards her from the gaze of the outside (predominantly male) world. This video provides an introduction to the changing role of home design in the wealthy state of Qatar and how it relates to gender identity and other cultural values.
VIDEOGRAPHY WORKSHOP
Consumer Videography in the Real World
Russell W. Belk, York University, Canada
Marylouise Caldwell, University of Sidney, Australia
Paul Henry, University of Sidney, Australia

ABSTRACT
When we estimated the number of handouts for this workshop, we were sure that a dozen should be sufficient. As it turned out, there were more than three times that many participants. Marylouise Caldwell was unable to attend the workshop due to medical problems, but sent her slides and comments with her colleague Paul Henry. Together Paul and Russ discussed a variety of topics and showed some instructional video. A basic outline of the workshop topics included:

1. Workshop overview and session goals: 4 T Criteria as Guiding Model
   - Institutional, technological and industrial context
   - IRB, informed consent, promotion & tenure concerns
   - Pragmatics: producing, scripting and directing the documentary
   - Building a film unit

2. Using Videographic Equipment
   - Camerawork, composition, and sound
   - In the field

3. Editing
   - Logging and capturing
   - Transitions
   - Building a narrative
   - Music & Titles

4. Below the Line Ts: Theatrical and Technical Criteria
   - Documentary overview
   - Discussion of narrative form

5. Additional Issues
   - Copyright and IP issues
   - Postproduction matters
   - Web-based compression and digital distribution Including YouTube
   - Getting your work watched

If this turnout and enthusiasm are any indication, the Film Festivals of future ACR conferences should show many films from this year’s workshop participants.
Consumer Empowerment and Casino Loyalty Programs: An Examination of Temporal Orientation and Consumer Choice

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Flavia Hendler, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, USA

Bill enjoys telling his friends that he lives one day at a time and is known as a thrill seeker. Neal, meanwhile, has set specific goals in his life, and is very focused on achieving such goals. He believes that meeting deadlines and doing necessary work come before today’s play. Both are gamblers and members of casino loyalty programs, but while Bill joined because he was interested in the immediate points given to him upon signing, Neal considered the immediate benefits tacky give-aways and was more interested in enjoying benefits over long periods of time.

Las Vegas, the gambling destination of choice for Bill and Neal (as well as millions of other gamblers), has casinos that offer different types of players incentives, ranging from options where the gambler has greater control over the comps (usually less luxurious) to options where the casinos remain in control of the rewards offered (common at higher-end casinos).

Wathieu et al (2002) offered a set of research directions for understanding positive and negative consequences of increased consumer control as well as the factors that translate in the subjective experience of empowerment. These researchers propose that the experience of empowerment is influenced by three factors: control over the choice set composition (how many alternatives, flexibility), progress cues offered (ability to repeatedly assess standing before making a choice) and information about others (how one is doing in comparison to others). Harrah’s, the largest casino loyalty program, offers gamblers to choose when and where they want to stay for their gambling trip, on-line booking with information on availability and accrued points (redeemable for clearly stated benefits). In Harrah’s program, players can visually see the differentiated treatment for higher level members in the casino (such as shorter lines at restaurants, special VIP rooms, parking). That program is in contrast to the traditional Las Vegas casino loyalty program where complimentary rooms, food and beverage, or other benefits are given at the discretion of the casino and special offers (such as free night stays) are often sent for times of projected low occupancy so the loyalty program acts as part of a larger yield management system.

Presently the casino loyalty programs offer incentives that have broad appeal—Bill and Neal, for instance, would be treated similarly. We suggest that one important psychological variable—temporal orientation—would impact the level of choice and empowerment a gambler (and more generally a consumer) would desire in a loyalty program. Temporal orientation refers to one’s tendency to focus on the past, future, or present (Zimbardo and Boyd, 1999).

Neal represents the future-oriented mindset. Based on the literature we suspect that this type of consumer will evaluate the more long-term and abstract levels associated with their choice of the loyalty program, while present-oriented consumers (like Bill) look for concrete details and more immediate benefits of their consumption experience. This study investigates how temporal orientation impacts the individual’s perceptions of what makes “an ideal” loyalty program and the type of control or empowerment sought in the relationship. Specifically, we examine how perceived control over loyalty program features impacts the subjective experience of empowerment for consumers who are future-oriented, consumers who are present-oriented and hold a hedonic approach to life (present-hedonist, Bill), as well as a third group without a clear time orientation but that holds a fatalist view of life (present-fatalist). These groups were obtained based on the Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (Zimbardo and Boyd, 1999). A qualitative interview technique, the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET), was used to uncover the conscious as well as deeper and unconscious meanings associated with those consumers’ views of loyalty programs (Zaltman (1996); Zaltman (1997)).

Our findings suggest that future-oriented consumers wanted a long term relationship with the casino. They wanted consistency in their experience (no surprises) and were not influenced by short-term lures or gimmicks and wanted information about market conditions so they could plan future trips. That group also wanted to give control over lower-level decisions and concrete details to the casino (or casino host). The future-oriented were most likely to complain, explaining that it would enhance others’ future experiences at the casino. The present-hedonist consumers, meanwhile, were more interested in having fun in the moment, so they sought benefits from the loyalty program that enhanced their experience and differentiated it (in a positive way). They liked surprises in their casino experience and wanted to try new experiences (like staying in different hotels). In addition, they wanted to feel more empowered in their program and know where they stand (as far as points accumulated so they did not feel like they had to beg for free meals). Last, the present-fatalists let the casino take the lead in the relationship. They navigated within the system eager to understand clearly how it works in order to take full advantage of it. That group was not as averse to the “begging” described by the present hedonists when having to ask the casino for comps. However, because they fail to communicate their needs/wants to the casino (unlike the future-oriented), they may be more likely to walk if a problem occurs or spread bad word of mouth about the casino and the loyalty program.

This study adds to academic research on loyalty programs in several ways. First, it demonstrates how temporal orientation can influence the type of relationship sought through a loyalty program. While the literature treats temporal orientation as a personality variable, there are marketing actions that can be used to influence the type of orientation one takes at a specific moment (such as the wording of the loyalty program information). Second, it illuminates the role of consumer empowerment in loyalty relationships (when it is advantageous, when not). The results should help practitioners strengthen the relationship with consumers by assisting companies to incorporate consumer empowering strategies in the service design and perhaps offering a personality variable (temporal orientation) for better targeted marketing strategies.
Introduction

Gender is an important issue in consumer research. Yet, few studies have addressed the relationship between retail strategies and masculinity and consumer research and values. Some scholars developed a framework to understand male consumption (Holt and Thompson, 2004, Schroeder and Zwick, 2004, Elliott and Elliott, 2006). While sociocultural changes are taking place in this postmodern era, the traditional masculine and feminine values are evolving, leading to changing gender roles and having impact on the market place (Kimmel and Tissier-Deshordes, 2000). Men are becoming concerned with appearance and beauty, in the traditional feminine way, and sales of male cosmetics and fashion are increasing. Trendy words are used to describe this “new man” sensitive to appearance, body conscious: metrosexual, übersexual... (Tuncay, 2006, Rinallo, forthcoming). Brands successfully develop new lines for men including jewelry, the lingerie and cosmetics. New departments stores dedicated to men opened recently with innovative concepts. Brands need to adapt their retailing strategies to changing male consumers. An efficient display of the new offer and persuasive brand communication in the store/Pos are key factors of success.

This paper intends to understand and describe how the new postmodern masculine values and codes shape retailing strategies targeting men.

Retailing and brand communication

The POS/Store are valuable place for communication and exchange with effective and potential customers. In this space, an aspect of the distinctive experience of the brand is also lived: it is particularly true for products linked to appearance (Hetzel, 2002). Key factors of success of these products rely on their own physical properties but also mainly on brand communication and the specific relation built with the consumer in the store. The development of the masculine segment linked to appearance seems to require new sale environments as they were previously mainly shaped to welcome female consumers. The context of new masculine aesthetic codes and the social fears largely expressed by men as regard to the consumption of fashion/beauty convey a theoretical account for a new definition of retailing strategies targeting men.

Masculinity and Consumer research

Male consumption and masculinity are of a renewed interest in consumer research. Scholars have recently proposed conceptualizations of masculinity (Tuncay and Otnes, 2007), started also exploring male reactions to media and fashion discourses (Elliott and Elliott, 2005, Rinallo, 2007), or analyzed male rep in advertising (Schroder and Zwick, 04, Ourahmoune and Nyeck, forthcoming). Yet, though communication in the POS/store is an essential link between brand narratives and “new male shoppers” discourses, it is insufficiently researched. Moreover, male shoppers behavior research has often involved expected traditional masculine category products and scarcely the fashion consumption. Despite some research, which indicates that men and women shop differently, Otnes and McGrath (2001) found that myths still exist on how men shop. They found in their study of male shoppers that some men did indeed enjoy shopping and even purchased “feminine” goods such as crystal. Also, study by Rinallo (2007) of (real) male discourses on fashion revealed that the distribution canal could have an impact on men’s behavior toward the new offer and their decision to step into it. Therefore, we propose to enhance our knowledge of brand discourses on masculinity through the retailing.

Research questions

• How do brands display new masculine codes in department stores, concept stores, and flagships to stay in touch with evolving male consumers?
• How do the stores and products display successfully convey the diverse masculine representations vs the former unique one (traditional)?
Methodology
Structural semiotic allows discovering the meaning of cultural codes contained in brand narratives (Floch, 1995). An observation on the POS for each brand is followed by immediate report on a grid previously conceived by the researchers with systematic analysis categories (design, style, light, colors, forms, furniture, male/female rep, itinerary, store windows...). Also, researchers use a journal with free comments. Multiple visits to a same store by different authors of the paper allow to gather a maximum of information and to operate a triangulation. It is forbidden by law to take pictures on the POS. Then, each grid is analyzed and brands discourses compared to come up with our findings.

Data
Our study performs a semiotic analysis of 20 brands store visuals applied to sectors related to appearance (Skincare, Fashion, Lingerie): Vuitton, Gucci, Dior, Boss, Dolce & Gabbana, Smalto, Rolex, Cartier, Philippe Patek, Dunhill, Guerlain, Nickel, Clarins, Dim, Hom, Aubade, Barbara, Chanel, Celine, Mac
Brands under study are leaders on their specific. We selected brands only for men, only for women, and brands for both men and women to analyze a wide variety of gender brands discourses.

Major Findings
Semiotic brand analysis on the POS display different discourses addressed to male shoppers: traditional masculine themes vs feminine, undifferentiated masculine and feminine codes (androgynous) and finally new masculine codes. We deeply explore the meaning of each of them and the way they give an account of brands evolving masculine rep today. Yet, we found out that the majority of brands still emphasize a traditional masculinity on the POS clashing with mass media new masculine rep (ads, magazines, web site...). Then, some territories of communication are left empty by brands on the POS when dealing with masculine rep. The authors suggest that the media discourse might always been advanced when dealing with new values. Also, postmodern values are rising but are still not dominant. Brands seem to hesitate applying them to all of their customers.

Concluding comments
The paper is consistent with previous research that emphasizes male resistance to new brand discourses on masculinity that upset traditional masculine rep. Our study reveals that most brands take into account social fears expressed by male consumers when dealing with communication on the POS. Even brands that display very new media/ advertising discourses on masculinity follow a prudent retailing communication. Then, we address a lack in the literature as regard to masculinity and retailing. However, the paper also anticipates innovative communication territories crucial to brands managers that target male consumers specifically on the POS/store.

Limits
Future research should explore more deeply the reason of such a difference between brands communication on the POS and brands ads/media discourses as regard to masculinity.

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Male Consumers Entering the Private Sphere: An Exploratory Investigation of French Male Involvement, Practices and Interactions Around the Lingerie for Men Consumption

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Abstract
Consumer research literature lacks male consumers’ conceptualization (Schroder and Zwick, 2004; Elliott and Elliott, 2005). Important changes in society among men and women and their relationships have an impact on the marketplace (Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes, 2000). Men are more concerned with appearance. Nevertheless, this consumption is subject to taboos. In this paper, we present and discuss the findings of an exploratory investigation of French men consumption of new and highly symbolic products: the lingerie for men. We describe the moments of life favourable to this consumption, prescriptors’ roles. Also, male interactions with women (couple) and with male peers are investigated.

Introduction
Male consumers entering the private sphere: an exploratory investigation of French male involvement, practices and interactions around lingerie for men consumption

There is a lack in the literature as regard to male consumers’ conceptualization (Holt and Thompson, 2004; Schroder and Zwick, 2004; Elliott and Elliott, 2005, Tuncay, 2006). Important changes in society among men and women and their relationships have an impact on the marketplace (Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes, 2000). Men are becoming concerned with appearance more of a traditional feminine territory. Brands develop successfully the jewellery, the lingerie and cosmetics. Nevertheless, this consumption is subject to taboos leading men to negotiate the legitimate/unacceptable behaviours through their consumption choices. In this paper, following a literature review of masculinity, intimacy and consumer research, we present and discuss the findings of an exploratory investigation of French men consumption of new and highly symbolic products: the lingerie for men.

Firstly, the research objective is to reveal the process of men involvement in a new practice of consumption strongly embedded in a feminine culture. Secondly, we aim to discover the interactions within the straight couple, with women and with the peers about this practice.

Data and Methodology
Authors conducted semi-structured interviews with 21 French men since late 2005 focusing on lingerie for men consumption. This was to try to capture a trend in social sciences analyzing male as entering the realm of intimacy as a major sign of changing masculinity (de Singly, 2001, Welzer-Lang, 2004, Castelain-Meunier, 2005…).

Authors managed to find almost all the informants “among people in the entourage or among people that could introduce me to people they know” (Bourdieu, 1993, P907).

The criteria for selection of interviewees has been based on their participation in this behaviour for some of them (12) although interviewees referred to the gay mediation and also the impact of new men’s magazines.

Individual interviews were of between one and two hours’ duration and carried out in Paris, Marseille and Aix-en-Provence (respondents’ houses). Interviews were taped, recorded and the respondents were offered the opportunity to view the transcripts.

Results and Discussion
Describing the involvement process of male consumers in underwear
Functional vs. Aesthetic underwear is italicized through the respondent’s discourses.

Moments of life
As far as buying underwear is concerned, it is obviously not possible to date the appearance of such an ordinary practice. Yet, it was possible to identify triggering events of new practices of consumption through the informants’ discourses.

- Reaching adolescence, Reaching 30, Working, Moving to a big city and Settling in a relationship

From neophyte to specialist: several mediations
Women’s initiation. Most of the practising interviewees seem to be integrated in an aesthetic network mainly made of women, friends, and inside which develops a specific sociability on exchanging aesthetic information, beauty advices, which enables the creation of new social bonds between men and women. Women’s interaction in the building of men’s appearance can also be seen through the influential role of the partner. Another central feminine figure, which accompanies the man in his building of his appearance, is the mother figure.

But men’s learning is not only done by a female mediation, interviewees referred to the gay mediation and also the impact of new men’s magazines

Exploring interactions inside straight couples and with the male peers about this traditionally “risky” practice
The interactions in the couple about men buying “aesthetic underwear.”

We analyse here the interactions within straight couples. Respondents often considered this as leading to a new interaction in the couple. 2 kinds of messages emerge:

- A hedonist mode
- A play mode
We can wonder if the strength of this couple practice is not due, in a certain way, to the fact that it is a “clandestine” male practice. Therefore, men’s purchase of underwear seems valorised by their partner.

Those practices are underlied by the idea that, in a couple, man and woman must care both about their looks in order to prove they care about each other: man and woman both remain in a seduction balance:

Nevertheless, this balance can break when the man cares more about himself than the woman does.

Men’s interactions about the consumption of men’s underwear

What kinds of interactions are there between the group of men, the masculine sphere of friends and family, and our interviewees, regarding this booming of female-inspired underwear? Do ‘practicing men’ talk about how they worry about their appearance amongst their peers?

- The countermodel of the father

The majority of practising interviewees’ fathers do not seem to worry about the way they look, or even be familiar with it.

Age seems to be a discriminating factor. This recurring father/son opposition can be interpreted as an opposition of generations.

- Dealing with the risks of masculine stigmatisation

Beyond this lack of interest, the relation with masculinity is at stake. Indeed, many men today believe that taking care of oneself or worrying about underwear is something typically feminine. This is why many men often stigmatise those practices as “effeminate”, gay, as anti-masculine. The ideal image of a man partly remains the “tough man”.

- The « secret garden »

Thus, fearing about being stigmatised by other men as deviant brings a certain kind of control: the secret, expressed through the interviews.

- Avoided and unspoken subjects:

Even with those who seem to put up with their practices and claim it, it is possible to hear a contradictive discourse, which reveals an issue: dealing with risks of being stigmatised by men. On the one hand, they claim to deny the notion of male taboo as for buying underwear. On the other hand, i.e. in the facts, we notice that some of the interviewees who “put up” with their choice of taking care of themselves avoid their male peers. Within the masculine “between us” (different from the couple’s) men’s sociability rejects any references with an aesthetic intimacy, judged as anti-masculine.

Conclusion

Theoretical and managerial implications are the revelation of men’s moments of life and situations that are favourable to male entrance in the appearance/intimacy consumption as well as the way key prescriptors guide men in a new masculine consumer culture.

Also, this paper is consistent with previous research showing social fears expressed by male consumers about the legitimacy of male beauty practices (Elliott and Elliott, 2005, Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes, 2000, Rinallo, 2007). Stigmatisations risks by male peers were more explicitly revealed while male interactions with women, especially in the privacy of the couple seem to encourage this consumption.

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The Effect of Brand Sound on Consumers’ Brand Evaluation in Japan
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The purpose of this study is to examine, based on sound symbolism, the effect of brand sound on consumers’ brand evaluation in Japan. Sound symbolism refers to a systematic relationship between sound and meaning (Hinton et al. 1994; Newman 1933; Sapir 1929). It suggests that not only a word itself but also its sound conveys meanings. In recent years, several studies have applied sound symbolism to brand name development (Heath et al. 1990; Klink 2000, 2001, 2003; Lowrey et al. 2003; Lowrey and Shrum 2007; Yourkston and Menon 2004).

These previous studies indicate that brand sound affects the perceptions of product attributes, and also imply that appropriate brand sound can enhance brand evaluation. However, little is known about how the sound of brand name has an effect on brand evaluation and how strong the effect would be. In addition, little attention has been given to individual differences in the effect. For example, how much difference is there, such as gender differences? Moreover, as far as we know, relationship between brand sound and brand evaluation has been examined only in the West. This means whether brand sound can be effective for Asian consumers or not remains unrevealed.

To answer these questions, we will examine the relationship between sound of brand name and the perception of brand attributes, and also the mechanism of the effect of brand sound on brand evaluation in detail.

The previous research mentioned above suggests that brand sound conveys meanings about product attributes such as size, weight, color, shape, speed, and touch. The meaning of brand sound depends on what kind of vowels and consonants are included in the brand name. In respect of vowels, front-back distinction is important. Compared with front vowels (e.g. i, e), back vowels (e.g. a, u, o) tend to be perceived as bigger, heavier, darker, and rounder. As for consonants, similar differences can be observed in fricatives (e.g. f, s, v, z) and stops (e.g. p, t, b, d). As stated above, sound symbolism exists in both vowels and consonants, but we will focus on the effect of vowels for the study to be manageable. Preceding studies also suggest that sound symbolism cuts across the languages (Hinton et al. 1994; Utlant 1977).

From these discussions, we set the following hypotheses. The first hypothesis is:

H1(a-d): Product with brand name containing back vowels, as opposed to front vowels, are perceived as: (a) bigger, (b) heavier, (c) darker, and (d) rounder.

There are a few studies examining the effect of brand sound on brand evaluation, but previous research on brand name imply the following two points. First, brand name is one of the most important cues for brand evaluation and has effects on perceived quality (Dawar and Parker 1994; Klink 2000, 2001, 2003; Rigaux-Bricmont 1982; Wänke et al. 2007; Zinkhan and Martin 1987), brand attitude (Klink 2001, 2003; Zinkhan and Martin 1987), and brand image (Del Río et al. 2001; Pavia and Costa 1993; Zinkhan and Martin 1987). Second, the effect of brand name on brand evaluation depends mainly on the fit between a brand name and its product. It seems that there are two kinds of fit. One is the fit between a brand name and its product category (Pavia and Costa 1993; Peterson and Ross 1972; Wänke et al. 2007; Zinkhan and Martin 1987). For example, Zinkhan and Martin (1987) demonstrates that if the brand name implies its product category more adequately, and then brand attitudes can be enhanced. The other is the fit between a brand name and its product attributes (Keller et al. 1998; Klink 2000, 2003; Lowrey and Shrum 2007). For example, Klink (2003) demonstrates that the brand name of dark beer with a back vowel (Doiti) receives higher evaluation in brand liking and perceived quality than that with a front vowel (Deiti).
From these arguments, we shall state the second and third hypothesis as follows.

H2(a-c): The fit between a brand sound and its product category increase (a) perceived quality, (b) brand image, and (c) purchase intention.

H3(a-c): The fit between a brand sound and its product attributes increase (a) perceived quality, (b) brand image, and (c) purchase intention.

To test these three hypotheses stated above, we have conducted a questionnaire survey with Japanese undergraduate students (n=344). In this survey, we presented three categories of products (automobiles, mobile phones, and wristwatches) with three pairs of artificial brand names (nidax/nodax, renep/runep, and diram/duram) to measure the effect of brand sound on perceiving product attributes and the perceived fit between brand name and product category. We also presented several brand stimuli which served as cue to evaluate the fit of a brand name to its product attributes (e.g. Renep is a light-weight minicar with angular shape and light color) and overall brand evaluations. In addition, the participants were required to answer questions regarding product involvement, product knowledge, and purchase attitudes (rational/emotional) to measure individual differences in the effect of brand sound.

The results of t-test and structural equation modeling indicate following points: 1) Brand sound has significant effects not only on perceived quality and brand image, but also purchase intention through the fit of a brand sound to its product category and product attributes. This means that brand sound can be deeply and complexly involved in brand evaluation. This also suggests that in order to developing effective brand name, it should be essential to consider fit between brand sound and product features more carefully. 2) The overall effect of brand sound on brand evaluation is stronger in female than in male as well as in subjects with higher emotional purchase attitude than those with lower. These results imply that brand sound can be more effective on brand evaluation of female consumers and those who are sensitive to emotional aspects of product. 3) The effect of brand sound is observed in Japan in the similar way as in the West. This suggests that brand sound is useful for developing effective brand name not only in Western market but also Asian market.

References


Participation and Social Representation of Afro-descendants Individuals Portrayed on Brazilian Magazines Advertisements: 1968–2006
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The main purpose and focus of the present study lies in the investigation of how afro-descendant individuals have been portrayed by Brazilian magazine advertisements along a period ranging from 1968 up to 2006, on what concerns their social representations.

According to Jones (2004), Brazilian society has been facing a growing process of social mobility in the recent past that has contributed to an increase in the number of afro-descendants individuals with purchasing power as well as diversified social roles. Nonetheless, still according to Jones (2004), it is possible to notice that the presence and usage of afro-descendant individuals on advertising has not evolved at the same rate as the verified social mobility.

Moreover, it has been observed through the review of previous studies (ACEVEDO et al, 2006; FERREIRA, 1993, 2001; STEVENSON; SWAYNE, 1999; CORRÊA, 2006; CUNHA; GEHARDT; LENGLER, 1997) that both the low level of presence of this group of individuals as well as their stereotyped representation on advertising are able to cause negative influence on them. According to the mentioned studies, among such influences it can be highlighted the following: a) feeling of social invisibility or exclusion; b) effects on the construction and maintenance of an individual ethnic identity; c) impact on an individual self-esteem.

In order to assess this phenomenon the study makes use of content analysis methodology on advertisements published in 144 magazines of three categories (general interest, feminine and business) alongside a qualitative analysis of two selected automobile related pieces of advertisements that display at least one afro-descendant individual on it meant at assessing how ads portray them and build their social representation.

The methodology approach chosen for the present study is in accordance with similar previous researches such as the ones conducted by Dominick; Greenberg (1970), Kassarjian (1969; 1977), Cox (1970), Humphrey; Schuman (1984), Taylor; Landreth; Bang (2005), Ahmed (1996), Rocha (1990), Roso et al (2002), Sabat (2001).

The supporting theories and concepts that contribute to the analysis and understanding of this phenomenon comprise: a) Whitening Ideology; b) Myth of Racial Democracy; c) Theory of Stigma; d) Theory of Established and the Outsiders; e) Social Representation Theory.

This study has its relevance justified within consumer behaviour research due to the fact that it deals with: a) a subject of study by many scholars abroad on numerous graduate business schools; b) assessment of issues regarding the creation, reinforcement and diffusion of stereotypes and stigmas of afro-descendant individuals; c) a significant portion of the country’s population that has been experiencing an increasing diversification of social roles along the recent past.

Moreover, on an exploratory research covering a period of over a decade, it was possible to identify that there is a lack of articles on this subject on leading Brazilian journals such as Revista de Administração Contemporânea (RAC), Revista de Administração de Empresas da Fundação Getúlio Vargas (RAE-FGV) and Revista de Administração da Universidade de São Paulo (RAUSP). On the other hand, the same exploratory research has revealed that on an international level this subject has been discussed and analyzed on leading journals such as the Journal of Marketing, Journal of Advertising Research, Journal of Macromarketing and Journal of Consumer Research. Besides that, it is also understood that the scope of the present study is positioned within the field of macromarketing due to the fact that it analyses the consequences and impacts of businesses marketing actions and strategies upon society (HUNT, 1976; NASON, 1988, 2006).

So that, the comprehension of the mentioned phenomenon, represents a fundamental prerequisite for organizations make business transactions with society on a fairer, more equitable and no discriminatory basis.

The literature review conducted on the present study has allowed to realize that there is an interplay among the mentioned theories and concepts, the advertisements published in magazines and their effects on society as a whole and on the afro-descendant individuals in particular. Besides that, it is observed that Oliva (2003) stated that as a mean to interpret reality, any individual recapture his cultural stock (or in other words his values and beliefs) as a helping tool to deal with the unknown. Similarly, a piece of advertisement makes use of social representations in order to interpret and depict the reality before it and then convey the message to the consumer. However, what is seen is that, when it comes to represent afro-descendant individuals on advertising messages, values and beliefs are strongly influenced by the Whitening Ideology, Myth of Racial Democracy and Stigmas (MOSCOVICI, 1994; HORTA, 1995; QUENZA, 2005; GOFFMAN; 1963; ELIAS; SCOTSON, 2000).

So that, it is discerned that a piece of advertisement conveyed to society (or consumers) has the capability to: 1) construct; 2) reinforce; 3) spread social representations. It is observed that on the moment that society as a whole is subject to those advertising messages impregnated with the mentioned prevailing cultural stock, it is realized that they are prone to cause influence on: a) consumer behaviour; b) construction of consumer values and beliefs; c) process of reality interpretation and perception of social representation. On this way, such factors act as strengthening of the actual cultural stock and so the current system of social representation is kept unchanged.

On what regards the afro-descendant individuals as members of the same society and recipients of the very same pieces of advertisements that usually underrepresent them (quantitatively speaking) or stereotype them (qualitatively speaking) it is understood that they are prone to affect afro-descendant individuals on the following aspects: a) ethnic identity; b) self-esteem; c) feeling of social invisibility or exclusion. All those factors were revealed on numerous previous researches such as the ones conducted by Acevedo et al (2006), Carneiro (1999), Rahier (2001), Bristor; Lee; Hunt (1995), Appiah (2001), Corrêa (2006), Baptista da Silva (2005), Fagundes (2006).

Therefore, through a quantitative approach represented by the content analysis technique alongside a qualitative approach trough the analysis of two pieces of advertisements displaying afro-descendants individuals, the present research aims to investigate the evolution of this phenomenon in Brazil along nearly four decades and add a contribution to the betterment of marketing practices.
Social Network Connectedness to Soap Operas, Celebrity Product Endorsement, and Consumer Behavior

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Abstract

One factor that has not received attention in the literature but that affects the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement and product placement is consumers’ perceptions of their social networks. We propose and demonstrate that perceptions about attitudes and behavior of consumers’ social networks toward a given medium (network connectedness) directly affect consumers’ purchase intentions of brands advertised through soap opera celebrities. Data from a field study of Brazilian consumers show that this network connectedness effect exists independently from that of self connectedness (the extent to which viewers develop parasocial relationships with characters that resemble real close relationships.)

Introduction

Entertainment content such as TV soap operas and movies are highly desirable media for placing products and brands because the characters naturally receive direct attention from viewers, and because the characters often become celebrities in their own right. In particular, product placement and celebrity endorsement are popular means of promoting fashion products. Although the relationship between viewers and the medium itself (e.g., soap operas and movies) has been identified as a determinant of the effectiveness of these marketing practices, consumer perceptions of their social networks’ attitudes and behavior toward the medium have not been directly linked to such effectiveness.

Consumers’ social networks are especially important because most people are moderately connected to others and willing to share marketing information with others (Smith et al. 2007). Given that the entertainment industry naturally provides popular topics for discussion in social networks, we expect marketing actions in this domain to generate social interactive effects that significantly increase the effectiveness of firms’ efforts beyond their direct effects on consumers. We propose that social interactions driven by product placement and celebrity endorsement take the form of social network connectedness, which we define as consumers’ perceptions of how others are affected by marketing communications from a particular source (in this case a medium).

We argue these perceptions play a significant role in the fashion context where social utility is a prime determinant of behavior (McIntyre and Miller 1992). We propose and demonstrate that network connectedness directly affects one’s purchase intentions of an advertised brand, beyond previously documented effects of self connectedness to a medium—the extent to which viewers develop parasocial relationships with characters that resemble real close relationships (Russell, Norman, and Heckler 2004). We focus on the use of soap opera celebrities in advertising campaigns for fashion products, as well as product placement in soap operas—more specifically, novelas, which are highly popular, prime-time, serial fiction (La Pastina 2001).

Novelas owe their popularity to the presentation of types of people whom viewers recognize and with whom they become familiar over time (Russell and Stern 2006). The prominence of consumption in the genre is reflected in the importance of products such as clothing, makeup, home furnishings, and food to the characters (Cornwell and Keillor 1996). In the clothing domain, fashion trends tend to be associated with wealthy urban characters (La Pastina 2001) who serve as aspirational referents. La Pastina (2001) argues that the desire to learn about fashion, lifestyle trends, and behavior is intrinsically associated with soap operas, fuelling knowledge of consumer goods and lifestyles. Therefore, a better understanding of the effects of product placement in soap operas is of high relevance for marketing.

Empirical Evidence

Research Context and Procedures

A field study was conducted in Brazil in collaboration with a high-end fashion retailer whose brands have been featured in several novelas and been endorsed by soap opera celebrities. The data were collected by intercepting Brazilian women as they exited one of five selected stores. The stores were selected to span different geographic areas within a large city as to maximize variance in socio-economic status. All participants who completed the brief survey were entered in a lottery for a free pair of shoes at that store.

The questionnaire assessed their attitudes toward the brand, number of products of this brand they had previously bought, and how much they intended to buy in the future (purchase intention). It also captured network connectedness and self connectedness to soap operas using measures adapted from (Russell et al. 2004), the amount of time they spent per week watching soap operas, and whether they had seen the brand in a soap opera (attention to placement). Finally, susceptibility to interpersonal influence (Bearden, Netemeyer, and Teel 1989), age, and highest education level were measured.

Descriptive Results

One hundred and thirty one women aged 12 to 77 (M=39.8) participated. On average, participants reported spending six hours per week watching soap operas (SD=5.45). Levels of connectedness to soap operas spanned the scale, from 1 to 5, with means of 3.15 (SD=1.07) for self connectedness and 3.52 (SD=1.02) for network connectedness. Evidence of discriminant validity between self and network connectedness is visible in the relatively low correlation between the two constructs (r=41).

Self (α=.84) and network (α=.85) connectedness were regressed on level of education, age, and susceptibility to interpersonal influence (α=.77). Self connectedness was related to both susceptibility to interpersonal influence (Std B=.19, t(123)=2.20, p<.05) and level of education (Std B=.22, t(123)=2.54, p<.05). Network connectedness was only related to susceptibility to interpersonal influence (Std B=.25, t(113)=2.76, p<.05). Surprisingly, age did not affect either type of connectedness.

Analyses

We compared the effects of self and network connectedness on attention to brand placement in soap operas, attitudes toward the brand, and brand purchase intentions. Regressions were conducted for each DV on self and network connectedness, as well as susceptibility to
interpersonal influence and the number of previously purchased products of the brand as a control. For the attitude DV, attention to brand placements was also added, and for the purchase intention DV, both attention to the placements and attitude were included.

Self connectedness was a significant predictor of whether they had seen the brand in soap operas ($\text{Std } B=\cdot26, t\text{(114)}=2.45, p<.05$), but not network connectedness ($\text{Std } B=\cdot.00, t\text{(114)}=.05, p>.05$).

Attitudes toward the brand ($\omega=.72$) were generally positive ($M=1.42; 1=\text{high}$). In turn, having seen the brand in soap operas was a significant predictor of attitude toward the brand ($\text{Std } B=.24, t\text{(113)}=2.10, p<.05$), but neither self nor network connectedness impacted attitudes toward the brand directly.

Finally, in terms of purchase intentions, controlling for the number of previously purchased items, we found that participants were more likely to purchase the brand if they had seen it in soap operas ($\text{Std } B=.19, t\text{(109)}=2.00, p<.05$), and we also found the predicted direct effect of network connectedness ($\text{Std } B=.24, t\text{(109)}=2.24, p<.05$), which significantly increased the model fit ($\Delta R^2=.04, F\text{(1, 109)}=5.01, p<.05$).

Conclusions

Data collected through a field study of Brazilian consumers of a high-end fashion brand promoted with soap opera celebrities in marketing campaigns show that the effect of network connectedness on purchase intentions operates independently from the already documented effect of self connectedness (Russell et al. 2004). Self connectedness indirectly affects purchase intentions through greater awareness of brands placed in soap operas, which increases attitudes’ favorability toward the brand. In addition, network connectedness has a direct effect on purchase intentions. Our findings suggest that marketers should take social network connectedness into account when planning strategies involving product placement and celebrity endorsement.

References


Meanings of Ethical Consumption in Fashion and Clothing Markets

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Ethical consumption is not a recent phenomenon, although lately, related to globalization and sustainable development, it has become *in vogue* again. Since the culture of consumption is deeply embedded in the dominant organizing framework of modern societies, advancing more sustainable consumption practices has become quite a problematic task as Kilbourne, McDonagh and Prothero (1997) have argued. Indeed, Bucholz (1998) has suggested that a move towards more sustainable consumption would need to be seen in the light of changes in the ethics governing our societies.

Much of the previous research on ethical consumption has tended to divide ethical consumption into two opposite categories or to define ethical consumption a priori. In this paper, however, my aim is to argue that a more nuanced understanding is needed. Drawing on normative ethics (Barnett, Cafaro & Newholm 2005) and cultural consumer research (Arnould & Thompson 2005; Moisander & Valtonen 2006), I aim to bring new insights into the diverse representations of ethical consumption, and to open up new discussion on the notion of ethical consumption. The context of this study is fashion and clothing market that, as a highly global environment, offers a particularly interesting setting for studying consumer behavior in the contemporary marketplace.

My aim in this paper is to present the preliminary findings of the consumer interviews that I have conducted for my Ph.D. study. The cultural approach that I have adopted in this study has not been applied much of the previous research on ethically oriented consumption of fashion and clothing (e.g. Iwanow, McCaChern & Jeffrey, 2005; Joergens, 2006). To investigate empirically how consumers discursively construct and negotiate meanings of consumption in fashion and clothing markets and how ethical consumption is constructed and negotiated in this context, I have been conducting long interviews (McCracken 1988) in Helsinki, Finland, in 2007-2008. In the analysis I am applying a discourse analytic approach that draws both on the ethnomethodological (Potter 1996, 1997; Potter & Wetherell 1987) and Foucauldian traditions on studying discursive formations and practices (Gubrium & Holstein 2000, 2003).

In this study fashion and clothing markets are understood as a cultural production system (McCracken 1986; Peñaloza 2000, 2001; Peñaloza & Gilly 1989), which offer certain cultural discourses as Thompson and Haytko (1997) have described in their model of consumer-centered dialogical process of meaning appropriation. The sample of my study consists of 18 consumers that were 25-35-years-old, all with a university degree, working and without children. Since ‘being informed’ and ‘having enough money’ have been often addressed as reasons for not being able to act in a more sustainable manner, this sample is expected to add to this discussion. The participants...
were recruited by snowball sampling. The participants were allowed to freely talk about ‘consumption’, ‘fashion’ and ‘clothing’ without imposing particular conceptual frames on these terms.

The interview talk produced for this study is understood to be speaking to and emerging from the cultural ways of understanding and talking about a certain phenomena (Silverman 2001; Rapley 2004; Moisander 2001). I view the descriptions giving access to the shared cultural discourses of fashion and clothing consumption and its ethical dimensions. As Rapley (2004) has argued, such descriptions derive from and produce culture. According to Peräälä (1997) the results of a case study can be understood generalizable when generalizability is understood as what is possible in other settings as well. In the era of globalization consumers, too, are increasingly global, and consumption experiences and practices seem to be taking new, global forms. Therefore, at the level of cultural discourses, the descriptions consumers produced in the interviews are probably also detectable from a wider cultural context.

The preliminary findings of my study suggest that (1) ethical stances to consumption appear as rather complex constructions, and (2) that consumers actively participate in these meaning-making processes. Moreover, (3) discussions on sustainability and ethicality constructed as limits for sustainable consumption the impossibility to over-simplify one’s life style and the unwillingness and ‘incapability’ to consume less. In addition, (4) discourses on the marketplace actors focused mainly on consumers and companies ignoring other possible actors.

Being ‘a conscious consumer’ can take a myriad of forms. Consumer meanings should thus not be divided only to two opposing categories such as ‘ethical’ and ‘unethical’ consumption. A more nuanced understanding of cultural principles and categories (McCracken 1986) is needed. Ethical consumption can mean, for instance, buying environmentally friendly products, evaluating the social responsibility of a brand or a company, and giving old clothes to charity.

Consumers are not passive, empty containers waiting to be filled up (e.g. Moisander & Valtonen 2005). For example, quality can hold up in changing fashions. In addition, personal style and fashions are continuously negotiated. This consumer meaning-making could be integrated better within the fashion and clothing industries. At the level of consumer theory this finding contributes to the further development of the notions of cultural discourses in the Thompson’s & Haytko’s (1997) model of consumer-centered dialogical process of meaning appropriation.

Discussions on sustainability and ethically constructed as limits for sustainable consumption the unwillingness to over-simplify one’s life style and the ‘impossibility’ to consume less. However, consumption and its role in having a good quality of life were also under negotiation. Making visible the discourses consumers call on when discussing the role of consumption in self-enhancement, social esteem and other immaterial rewards (Heiskanen & Pantzar, 1997) becomes thus important and should be further elaborated on.

Consumers and companies were addressed as the main actors in the marketplace. Discussions on the global responsibilities of different market actors tended to place most of the ethical problems on the supply and not the demand side. This echoes the findings presented by Connolly and Prothero (2003). It should be noted that the markets can not only offer but also limit the available cultural discourses. The silent moments when discussing the actions taken by other markets actors, such as governmental institutions, to advance sustainability can be interpreted as indicating limited discourses available (Moisander & Valtonen 2005).

References
When Does Personalization Fail? An Analysis of Recommendation Agents

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Online retailers face tremendous challenges as their markets become increasingly saturated with competitors. This emphasizes the importance for firms to become extremely efficient in meeting customer needs. This efficiency can come through personalizing marketing efforts to each individual consumer. Despite extant literature championing the cause of personalization, the purpose of this study is to show that personalization is not the “silver bullet” it purports to be through the examination of a specific e-commerce personalization tool, the recommendation agent.

Personalization/customization refers to the “ability to offer content or information according to user interests and specifications” (Rayport and Jaworski 2001). Personalization creates not only strategic advantages but also helps predict demand, manage inventories, and engage in discriminatory pricing (Blattberg and Deighton 1991). In other words, personalization provides direct and informational benefits (Chellappa and Sin 2005). From a vendor perspective, adaptive technologies, such as tracking and profiling technologies, provide vendors the ability to create individual-specific profiles that allow the targeting of customers on one-to-one basis, which helps increase customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and cross-selling possibilities (Peppers, Rogers, and Dorf 1999). These “adaptive interfaces” have the ability to adapt themselves to individual user’s needs, interests, and preferences, or knowledge (Alpert, Karat, Karat, Brodie, and Vergo 2003).

Online retailers use recommendation agents (hereafter referred to as RAs) as a tool for personalizing information and simplifying consumer search tasks. In this paper, we define RAs as personalized web-based agents that provide customers with suggestions based on the user’s personal characteristics (i.e. name and shipping address), preferences, purchase and search history, previous experience with the site and similar users' common preferences.

RAs are widely used by application providers for making suggestions. However, the level of personalization changes from a website to another. In some cases, it is difficult for users to distinguish whether items in a page are customized suggestions or simply a list of items shown to all users (Miao, Yang, Fang, and Goh 2007). In an era where customization and building customer relationships and loyalty are keys to success, it is inevitable that RAs will become a more important tool to help firms to keep up with the competition (Papazoglu 2000). Moreover, as Haubl and Trifts (2000) state, due to the limited process information capacity of consumers, these RAs provide consumers with an ideal tool to minimize the cognitive load imposed by excessive information on web pages. As RAs become more proficient in their preferences (Haubl and Trifts 2000). Further, the literature implies that recommendation agents always have a positive impact on consumers. However, our goal is to show that personalization does not always result in positive outcomes. Alpert, Karat, Karat, Brodie, and Vergo (2003) indicate that the prevalence of recommendations can lead users to be wary of attempts to infer consumer preferences. This wariness can be linked to trust and privacy issues.

Recent studies have shown that customers may not be willing to share information about themselves due to privacy concerns (Culnan 2000). Regardless of the incentive to use an e-commerce retailer, a lack of perceived privacy and information security could lead customers to be cautious of RAs and firms for fear of identity theft.
The existing literature also indicates that trust has a significant impact on online consumer behavior related to customer intentions (Yoon 2002), purchase and loyalty (Sultan, Urban, Shankar, and Bart 2002), prices (Ratchford, Pan, and Shankar 2003), and attitudes and risk perception (Jarvenpaa, Tractinsky, and Vitale 2000). If consumers have concerns about privacy issues, it could lead to a reduction in trust toward both the RA and the website.

This study attempts to answer questions regarding trust, privacy, security, and personalization via a series of experiments. The broad research question is: can personalization have a negative impact on trust, perceived privacy/security, and attitudes toward the RA and the firm? Affirmative findings will provide a significant contribution to the personalization literature by illustrating that personalization is not always an effective marketing tactic. We also posit that product type (hedonic vs. utilitarian) is also a moderator in the relationship between personalization and attitude towards the RA and firm. Ratchford (1987) stated that products vary in terms of being perceived as hedonic (how the product makes someone feel) vs. utilitarian (based on careful consideration of product attributes). If goods are evaluated in these ways, then recommendations could have a stronger impact on utilitarian products than hedonic ones because it should be easier to evaluate attributes (utilitarian) than to determine feelings (hedonic) in an online setting.

A pilot test provides initial support for the hypotheses. In the personalized and overpersonalized conditions for a utilitarian product, there was a significant difference in perceived security (p<0.05) in the predicted direction. Specifically, perceived security was lower in the overpersonalized condition, indicating that overpersonalization activated concerns of privacy and security. For the hedonic product, there was a marginal difference in perceived security (p=0.07). This seems to indicate that recommendations are less important or diagnostic for hedonic products. Future research will provide more detailed analysis of both the overpersonalization and hedonic/utilitarian dimensions and also extend RAs into other consumer research variables such as satisfaction and purchase likelihood.

References

The Host of Brand Extensions
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Recent research on consumer reactions to brand extension has mainly focused on the judgmental effects of the similarity between the established brand and the brand extensions. The present paper extends this research by investigating the effects of four types of characteristics of the category into which a brand is extended: (1) the awareness set size (2) the perceived similarity among existing brands, (3) the perceived category knowledge, and (4) overall category attitudes.

In most markets, assessment and choice of a specific brand must be considered in the context of a number of alternative brands that are available to the consumers. Choice probabilities in such settings can be influenced by the level of perceived similarity between the available alternatives in the product category. Consumer’s attitudes towards a product category into which a brand is extended, as well as their knowledge about it, could possibly influence their evaluations. To illuminate this issue, the aim of the present study is to investigate
the following category characteristics: (a) awareness set size; (b) similarity among the brands; (c) level of perceived knowledge about the product category, and (d) attitudes towards the extension category.

A field study was conducted to gather empirical data. The study involved three established brands, which were extended into a total of 11 product categories. These hypothetical brand extensions were used to test the effects of the category variables on assessments of the extensions. Insight from the first inquiry was extended in a second study, which was conducted to test the importance of attitudes towards the extension category in more dept.

Results from two studies suggest that brand extensions are judged more favorably when (a) the awareness set size is small, (b) the perceived similarity among brands in the extension category is high, and especially when (c) the attitude towards the extension category is positive. The results underscore the importance of the extension category as the host of brand extensions.

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Over the past 10 years, a growing stream of scholarship has contributed new insights on building and managing consumer brand equity. Brand equity refers to the value added by the brand name to the product (Farquhar 1989). Findings have shown that a product’s brand equity positively affects future profiles and long term cash-flow (Srivastava and Shocker 1991) and mergers and acquisitions (Mahajan and al. 1994). However, this field of research has stagnated owing to a lack of consensus concerning the definition of the main construct and how it can be measured.

**Development of a Scale for French Consumer Brand Equity**

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Park and Srinivasan (1994), distinguish between two kinds of definition. The first category refers to a firm point of view for measuring brand equity. From this perspective, equity is considered as the financial worth of the brand. The second category of definition is related to the consumer’s point of view and refers to the preference or the perception of added value of a brand name.

There are many methods for measuring consumer based brand equity. Researchers currently use ad hoc measures such as price premium (Aaker 1991), conjoint analyse value of brand names (Cobb-Walgreen and al. 1995), collections of consumer-based perceptions (Agarwal and Rao 1996) or scanner data (Kamakura and Russel 1993). However all of these measurements are primarily used by managers since they don’t include separate dimensions of brand equity.

In this vein, Yoo and Donthu (2001) were the first to develop a multidimensional consumer brand equity scale and to focus on its psychometric proprieties. The authors found three dimensions: loyalty, brand association/attention and perceived quality. These dimensions were later approved by Washburn and Plank (2002) who underlined the need to refine the dimensionality of brand equity such as perceived quality which should include price effect.

The use of student samples has limited previous research. Yoo and Donthu (2001) and Washburn and Plank (2002), both used student samples to validate their consumer brand-equity scales. The aim of this research is to further refine the sublety of brand equity analysis previously undertaken by the aforementioned authors by introducing more discriminating indicators and at the same time to create a French consumer brand equity scale.

In order to develop this scale, three studies were conducted taking into consideration Churchill’s paradigm. The objective of the first study was to generate a pool of items. After realising a series of 16 in-depth student interviews and a review of relevant literature, 43 items were selected. Three marketing experts then evaluated the content validity of these items. Each expert was presented with a brief definition of consumer brand equity and was asked to match the definition with the appropriate items. This process resulted in a set of 23 items for further analysis.

The objective of the second study was to refine and to test the 23 items. For this reason, data was collected concerning a random sample of 25 brands of athletic shoes via e-mail surveys. A total of 455 usable responses were received. The results of exploratory principal components factor analysis suggest a 12-item scale with four dimensions. As with Yoo and Donthu’s scale, the first two factors capture the value facet of loyalty and perceived brand quality. The third factor captures brand knowledge which is divided into brand recognition and brand awareness (Keller 1993; Aaker 1992). Finally, the forth dimension refers to the social value related to the consumption of the brand. Exploratory results seemed reasonable and parsimonious, and encouraged further structural testing using confirmatory factor analysis.

The third study was conducted to generate data for confirmatory factor analysis. Once again, the survey was e-mailed to a random and anonym sample of French consumers. Two questionnaires links were sent; the first surveyed two car brands (Clio 2 and Opel Corsa) and the second addressed the equity of two French coffee brands (Carte noire and Grand’Mère). These surveys resulted in 346 usable questionnaires. A series of confirmatory models was examined and evaluated using SEPATH module. The results give a good fit index (e.g., RMSEA_Carte Noire=0,052 and GFI_Carte Noire= 0,943 (Hair and al. 1998)) and definitely prove that the structure of consumer brand equity is conceptually comprised of four dimensions which are reliable and valid. Furthermore, the predictive validity of the scale was tested using two aspects of consumer brand equity: brand attachment and buying intention (Fournier 1998). Regression results confirmed the hypothesis that brand equity positively impacts the brand attachment and the intention of future buying. (R^2_Carte Noire=.563; p<.05).

The findings of this study differ from other research because, in contrast to Yoo and Donthu’s scale, we distinguish conceptually and empirically between brand association and brand awareness. This choice is supported by Low and Lamb (2000) who demonstrate that associations represent a more global concept and can be split into many dimensions. Second, social value is considered here as an independent dimension. In this way, Keller (2003) proposed that a new intriguing line of research, related to brand communities (Muniz and O’Guinn 2000) or subculture consumption (Mc Alexander 1995) can influence the overall evaluation of the value and the degree of brand knowledge. We think that the emergence of this social dimension is due in part to these new kinds and styles of consumption. Furthermore, according to Michel (1999), social representations of the brand are imbedded in the core of mental representation of French consumers. Finally as Nunnally and Berstein (1994) say, scales are made by: “conventions or agreements among scientists about a good scaling”. Thus, we intend to test and validate this study in other cultural contexts by using representative samples.

References
In most OECD countries, the issue of childhood and adolescent obesity implies a variety of health and social consequences which often continue into adulthood. Obesity can be linked to genetic causes, yet nowadays it can often be explained by poor dietary habits and or negative consideration of their peers. Yet, individuals, and especially adolescents, are sensitive to social norms and to the positive risks were not efficient (Duffy and Burton 2000; Hastings and MacFadyen 2002; Pechmann et al. 2003; Schoenbachler and Whittler 1996).

In order to analyze our suppositions, to validate the previous results in another context (French adolescents and obesity campaigns), we conducted a qualitative study with youths from 9 to 17 years of age (15 in-depth interviews). Combining projective techniques and stimulated questions, our results show that the vast majority of participants were aware of smoking, they can even create a positive image of cigarettes (‘‘forbidden fruit’’). In fact, research shows that adolescents are attracted by risk and new sensations (Wade and Tavris 2006) mainly because they feel invulnerable (Arnett 2000; Pechmann and Shih 1999). These specificities could explain the inefficiency of health related arguments (Pechmann et al. 2003; Sheth and Hunt 2005). Moreover, during adolescence, young people are especially sensitive to peer influence (Steinberg and Scott 2003). This social susceptibility leads us to suppose that campaigns using social arguments (linking social risk and eating behaviors) could be more effective. Actually, some scholars have demonstrated that this supposition works for anti-smoking campaigns (Ho 1998; Pechmann and Knight 2002; Pechmann and Ratneshwar 1994): messages focusing on social issues (disapproval, exclusion) were able to modify attitudes and behavior (Flynn et al. 1994; Schoenbachler and Whittler 1996; Zhao and Pechmann 2007).

Arguments that focus on social issues seem to be more efficient in the short term because they address concerns that are important to the adolescent, as compared to traditional health arguments that seem very distant from their present concerns. Yet, this kind of argument could also prompt some negative reaction because the adolescent is also conflict between conformity and differentiation. This negative reaction could thus reduce the campaigns’ efficiency.

In order to analyze our suppositions, we conducted the previous results in another context (French adolescents and obesity campaigns), and to prepare our experiments, we conducted a qualitative study with youths from 9 to 17 years of age (15 in-depth interviews).

Combining projective techniques and stimulated questions, our results show that the vast majority of participants were aware of obesity issues, could list the consequences of obesity and solutions, and additionally, could distinguish between what is good or bad for their health. Moreover, they spontaneously brought up obesity prevention campaigns. Yet, most of them did not feel that these initiatives were aimed at them.

These conclusions demonstrate that the participants seem to know the “rules” (what they should do) and the preventive messages. However, it seems unclear if these messages prompt an attitude and behavior transformation. Moreover, the negative critiques voiced by some of the participants raise the question: Young people know the “talk” but are they actually sensitive to it?
To answer this question, we analyzed more deeply these youths’ perceptions regarding the risks associated with obesity. Three major risks appeared through the manual and automatic analysis we conducted: physical risk (e.g. doing sports), health (disease associated to obesity) and social risk.

All of the participants were more sensitive to the social consequences of obesity as compared to the other risks (health and physical). The social consequences mentioned by the participants involved difference, discrimination, rejection, mockery for all ages and the oldest (15 to 17) brought up elements linked to love life and getting a job. All the respondents seemed to be conscious of the existence of a physical standard and mentioned that the over-weight person is different and therefore rejected.

In fact, our results seem to confirm the hypothesis that an argument based on the social consequences of obesity will be more efficient because it is closer to the present concerns of young people. Current research also reinforces the importance of adapting the preventive communication, especially when adolescents are the target. Furthermore, in order to develop messages that are compatible and accessible to the target, it is essential to adapt the vocabulary which is used. Due to the qualitative nature of the conducted study, we were able to collect expressions and terms used by the targets which are associated with obesity and can consequently help in the development process.

These results will help us determine how to design more effective obesity prevention campaigns and our proposals will be tested in upcoming experiments which will take place in French secondary schools focusing on underprivileged children, since this group is at greater risk in terms of obesity. Our conclusions are intended to provide concrete recommendations to public policymakers, companies, and health-related institutions in charge of obesity prevention campaigns.

References

Cultural Values and Purchasing Reasons in Four Latin American Countries. An Exploratory Study
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Despite the importance of globalization of technological consumer goods companies and their standardization strategies, little effort has been made to understand the assumption behind this: the convergence of cultural value systems, which means the notion that consumers share similar values, preferences and motivations regardless their country of origin (Levitt, 1983; Ritzer, 1993; Belk, 1996). As stated by De Mooij (2004) and Woods et al (1985), a major problem that intervenes in the prospects for global success is that values and product usage purposes may differ from culture to culture, even in closely contiguous markets. While one might easily believe that industrial and tech products are typically culture-free, this view is mistaken because the context in which they are used, as well as sought functionalities, depend on culture (Usunier & Lee, 2005).
People, as buyers and consumers, make decisions upon the conglomerate of values, ideas and symbols that form the culture with which they identify themselves (De Mooij, 2004; Engle et al., 1995; Usunier & Lee, 2005). Culture works as a benchmark allowing people to understand and give significance to the surrounding items or objects (McCracken, 1991; Usunier, 2000). Culture thus ends up by affecting the consumer’s behavior (Solomon, 2004). Therefore, we maintain that differences between LA consumers do exist and a lack of recognition of this can unnecessarily expose companies to risks that could be avoided, even in countries like Latin-American, usually viewed as culturally homogeneous.

Stemming from the review of cross-cultural-consumer-behavior-related literature and upon the fact of the scarce number of studies focused on LA region, we have sketched the following empirical research. This represents an attempt to enhance our understanding how culture influences the purchasing reasons among youth LA consumers.

This research paper’s is relevant due to the stress placed on understanding cultural influence rather than culture itself. Therefore, when exploring how similar the young from the 4 nations are in terms of cultural priorities, we are mainly interested in identifying what cultural-level tendencies may affect their tech item consumption and purchasing behavior (typically seen, as culture-free products, as Dawar & Parker, 1994 and Peterson et al, 1985, do consider). We suspect that if there are considerable differences among motivations for usage/purchase that young consumers from each country expressed regarding items such as cell phones, PC’s and music players, these differences should remain closely related to each country’s characteristic cultural profile.

Matched samples were used in order to minimizing sociodemographic influence when comparing at a cultural level, because this research focused on young consumers (18-29 years old, men & women, university students), residents in the main two cities of each of the studied countries. Data was gathered between June 2004 and October 2005. The survey was conducted by a web site application, through a self-applied questionnaire especially designed to fulfill all the research objectives. A total of 915 questionnaires were collected.

For each country sample, the cultural profiles were examined identifying value priorities at cultural level, using the Schwartz Value Inventory (SVI) (1994, 2006). This SVI consists of a list of 46 values that allows measuring 7 cultural values orientations: Hierarchy, Conservation, Mastery, Harmony, Egalitarian Commitment, Intellectual Individualism and Affective Individualism. Within the context of consumer behavior, Schwartz cultural approach have been used mainly to explain differences in attitudes about products use and advertising among nations (Bech-Larsen et al 1999; Beerli y Martín, 2004; Watson et al 2002; Schröder & McKinnon, 2006, 2007).

According to Schwartz’s theory, 7 indexes were calculated by country, then a Value Profile for each national sample were obtained. Based on this, cross-cultural comparisons were conducted in order to assessing the relative importance of each Value Type across countries, and determine if significant differences or similarities emerged.

In all LA samples, Egalitarian Commitment and Mastery rated as the most important Value types. Differences for each Value Type emerged when a Fisher test was performed (ANOVA). Significant differences were obtained for 6 out of 7 Value Types. Only harmony was rated equally low, in all the researched countries.

Also significant cross-national differences emerged in terms of cultural value priorities, using “Value Profile” during country characterization with SPAD program. Countries appear to have characteristic Value Profile when compared among them: Argentina, Egalitarian Commitment; Colombia, Affective Individualism, and Hierarchy; Mexico, Affective Individualism and Mastery; Venezuela, Conservation and Mastery.

From a list of 15 usage reasons, consumers were asked to select the most important one for each tech product evaluated (computer, music player and cell phone). Among the types of needs identified to be satisfied by each product, we found three kinds: experiential, social and functional needs. A Chi square test was performed to determine whether significant differences in the kinds of reasons for usage/consumption between national samples do exists.

By means of a descriptive analysis (using DEMOD procedure with SPAD), we found out the kinds of motive (functional, social or experiential, following Kim et al, 2002 and Woods et al, 1985 style) that most characterize how young consumers from each country use cell phones, PC’s and music players. Among Colombian and Mexican young consumers, the functional motives stood out as most characterizing their consumption profile for each of the tech items into question. Regarding the same products, social-type motives best identify Argentines. Contrarilywise, among Venezuelans, experience motives are the most distinctive, even though social motives are also relevant when it comes to certain products–mainly cell phones.

Although many similarities usually recognized among Latin-American countries, particularly among this region’s youth, like a group that has “developed” along with the globalization as a process in progress and has as well been exposed to global market strategies led off by several technological companies, in our study significant cross-national differences emerged in terms of cultural value priorities and usage reasons. Additionally, cultural value orientations were helpful to understand the differences founded in the usage reason of tech product among Latin youth.

These results suggest the theoretical framework proposed by Schwartz (1994, 2006) can help marketers to explain how similarities or different are, at cultural level, the LA nations, and most importantly, also can be used to gain insight into how products use and motivations are related to cultural facts, like values.

References

The Effects of Belonging to Consumer-Managed and Firm-Managed Virtual Brand Communities: The Case of Microsoft XBOX
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Over the last decade or so, brand communities have become established venues of marketing action for many products and services. The surging academic interest in this area can be traced to Muñiz’s (2001) seminal paper, in which they defined brand community as “specialized, non-geographically bound community(ies), based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand” (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001, p.412), and laid the theoretical groundwork for studying such communities.

More recently, Algesheimer and Dholakia (2006) documented the financial benefits of brand community programs to be extremely strong positive. Other studies have shown that brand communities offer a low cost, effective, customized and reliable means of interacting with an active selected group of loyal customers (Algesheimer and Dholakia, 2006; Muñiz and Schau, 2005; McAlexander et al., 2002). Despite the growing interest in this research area, some questions remains to be answered. One is that in spite of having considerable practical significance, little research has examined differences between firm-managed (FMC) and customer-managed brand communities (CMC). This issue is especially pertinent to many firms that have recently launched community sites only to find pre-existing thriving communities established and managed by their own customers. In this sense, specific questions concerning differences between FMC and CMC are studied in the current research: What are the differences between firm-managed and customer-managed brand communities? Which communities have a greater number of social interactions and are more effective in disseminating knowledge? Do these communities favor different sorts of interactions?

To examine these questions, we developed a theoretical model and research hypotheses to be tested. This model was based in an exploratory research performed in three phases: 1) Literature Review: this consisted of the comprehension of consumer participation in CMC and FMC through research available in the marketing, psychology, anthropology and other fields of literature; 2) Nethnographic Study: in this study one FMC and two CMC were analyzed for two products: Microsoft XBOX and National Instruments LabView. The analysis was done through the observation of the Forums in the brand communities’ during five month. The communities were based in English language. This phase allowed the comprehension of participation of consumers in different brand communities, managed by company or by consumers; 3) In depth interviews: were performed with four Brazilian consumers of high involvement products in order to fine-tune the dimensions and hypotheses for the theoretical model.

This exploratory research gave rise to a theoretical model and research hypotheses. This model will be explained through its dimensions, mediation (H1 to H7-all specify positive relationships) and moderation hypotheses (H8 to H10).

1) Demographic Homogeneity and 2) Shared Consciousness: according to Cova and Cova (2000) people belonging to the same community are part of a group that shares something is common, as interests. Preliminary exploratory studies performed showed that consumers with the same demographic profile are more willing to interact online. Also, in a virtual community, the internalization occurs when members agree that their values are in accordance with other group members values (Bagozzi e Dholakia, 2002),

2) Shared Consciousness: according to Cova and Cova (2000) people belonging to the same community are part of a group that shares something is common, as interests. Preliminary exploratory studies performed showed that consumers with the same demographic profile are more willing to interact online. Also, in a virtual community, the internalization occurs when members agree that their values are in accordance with other group members values (Bagozzi e Dholakia, 2002),
showing a shared consciousness (Muniz e O’Guinn, 2001).

Hypotheses (C=construct)-

3) Community Openness: the openness of the community communication flow refers to the ability for consumers to discuss in this space topics that concerning the brand and its instrumental value. Professionals should focus not on the product, but in providing conditions for members to interact and influence each other (Bagozzi e Dholakia, 2002).


4) Availability of Virtual Venues: this is related to availability of high interactivity venues, as chat-rooms, virtual games, etc., and low interactivity venues, as e-mails lists and bulletin boards (Bagozzi et al., 2005). Dholakia et al. (2004) argue that the level of interactivity gets higher with the synchrony through real time communication.


5) Brand Attachment: refers to identification with the brand and congruency of this brand with consumer self-image. Is a consumer already has a relation with the brand it can enhance community identification (Algesheimer et al., 2005).


6) Community Identification: this dimension is related to the sense of moral responsibility proposed by Muniz e O’Guinn (2001). According to the authors this sense of moral responsibility produces collectible action and is connected to reciprocity.


7) Level of Participation in the Community: refers to the number of times consumers interact in the community, showing support to others. Algesheimer e Dholakia (2006) characterizes, in this sense, consumers that are enthusiasts in the opposite of the ones the search for benefices without contributing.

Hypothesis-H6: C7?C8.

8) Behavioral Effects: to Algesheimer et al. (2005) the behavioral intentions of community members higher the tendency to stay in this community. So, consumers that intend to continue to have a relationship with the brand and with the community will show a higher tendency to develop more market related behaviors, as well as higher emotional relation with the brand (Algesheimer et al., 2005).


9) Marketing Effects: according to Fullerton (2005) a consumer is loyal why he/she has favorable attitude with the brand and is also a frequent buyer of it. To Bagozzi e Dholakia (2006) relationships where consumers have the same interests in the brand bring them to higher behaviors associated to repurchase and loyalty.

The moderation hypotheses considered in the model are following:

H8: Perceptions of Demographic Homogeneity will be higher for members of FMC relatively to CMC members.

H9: Perceptions of Shared Consciousness will be higher for members of CMC relatively to FMC members.

H10: Perception of Availability of Virtual Avenues will be higher for member of FMC relatively to CMC members.

These hypotheses will be tested using data that is being collected in January and February 2008 from two different communities for Microsoft XBOX: Portal XBOX (CMC) and XBOX Brazil (FMC). Empirical results will be able to be presented at ACR Latin American Conference.

References


The Effects of Negative Emotions Provoked by a Shocking Ad on Drinking and Driving: Measurement of Emotions with Izard’s Scale

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The purpose of this research is to study the effects of negative emotions elicited by a shocking anti-alcohol message on persuasion. The emotions tested correspond to the basic emotions defined by Izard (1977) excepting joy. The first part of this research is theoretical and allows us to define and understand the concept and way of action of the emotions in psychology then to present the different models having taken interest in fear appeals. The second part, of empirical nature aims to test different issued hypotheses based on the emotions literature.

Our work stands in the field of social marketing, especially public health. We focus on the use of negative emotions appeals in the case of advertising targeting an audience of young adults and directed towards prevention of physical and psychosocial risks linked to drinking and driving, which constitutes a major safety issue in many countries.

We build a conceptual model explaining persuasion. We suppose that fear, shame, guilt, distress, anger, disgust, contempt, surprise and interest have positive and direct effects on persuasion. We also hypothesize that for highly threatening messages, perceived ability to adopt the recommended solution has a positive impact on persuasion.

In order to test these hypotheses, an on-line questionnaire was answered by students belonging to different French universities. We collected 167 usable questionnaires. We verified scale dimensionality through exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. We also tested convergent and discriminant validities of the scales as well as reliability. A principal component analysis, with Promax rotation, performed on the 27 items of Izard’s scale (without the variable joy), resulted in four dimensions interpreted as: primary emotions, secondary emotions, contempt/disgust, and surprise.

A test of the model reveals a rather sufficient fit ($\chi^2 (491)=1258.97; \text{RMSEA}=0.0982; \text{AGFI}=0.745$). This test also shows that 3 of the 5 relations tested are verified (table 2). Thus, primary emotions, contempt/disgust, and self-efficacy have positive and direct effects on persuasion (H1a, H1c, and H2 accepted).

Contrary to our assumption, secondary emotions and surprise did not have the expected effects on persuasion. Meanwhile, recent studies maintain that threatening ads elicit a broad range of negative emotions such as fear, shame, or guilt which all have positive effects on persuasion (Becheur et al., 2007).

Moreover, even if the dimension contempt/disgust influences persuasion, this impact is surprising, because it’s negative.

Results support the theories of Leventhal (1970), Rogers (1983) and Witte (1992) considering that fear determines behavior, and extends findings on the role of fear to other emotions. This research also shows the importance of integrating solutions in threatening messages. Advertisers should recommend solutions perceived as efficient and easy to adopt (Rogers, 1983; Rothenberg, 1991; Witte, 1992; Block and Keller, 1997). Self efficacy would, allow to lower the cost of the recommended solution (Hale and Dillard, 1995).

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.

Moreover, to increase perceived self efficacy, we used verbal persuasion which consists in providing to the individuals information on how to avert the threat. Practitioners can also enhance self efficacy by vicariant learning (Gallopel, 2006). It would be interesting to test if the use of x-smokers or alcoholics testimonies increases self-efficacy.

The threat used in our study is both physical and social. Studies show that fear appeals are more persuasive among adults and that perceived susceptibility to physical threats increases with age (Smith and Stutts, 2003). Young people would then be more susceptible to social threats. It would be interesting to test the effect of our ad on an older target in order to study the moderating effect of age.

The expansion of this research to other populations and the evaluation of the moderating effects of gender are also highly recommended. In deed, women seem to react more intensely to emotional stimuli (Tangney, 1990) and experiment more shame, guilt, warmth, joy and fear than men. Block and Keller (1997) argue that fear appeals containing self efficacy are more persuasive among women than men.

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A Study of the Discourse of Possessions in Coping with the Stigmatized Gay Identity

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Many studies stress consumer actions as central to the creation of the symbolic meanings of society. Such actions are also important to the creation and maintenance of identities, and are used by us to find ourselves as social beings (Slater, 2000; Wattanusan, 2005). Belk (1988) states that consumers use their possessions to extend, expand and reinforce their sense of self. The author believes that the self would also be associated with various levels of identification, namely individual; family; community; and group.

We are using possessions to analyze how consumers construct or present their identities. We wonder whether these possessions could be regarded as a discourse, since the consumption we feel as being “ours” involves human action toward someone (who may be oneself or another), in a specific inter-rational context. Coelho (2002) says that goods can identify individuals, groups, and cultures and are, therefore, supports or textual units. Accordingly, possessions can be considered as a discourse that helps individuals in their identity-building processes and communicating with the groups to which they belong (Belk, 1988; Kates, 2002).

The Brazilian gay life has been marked by a story of fight against a conservative society that still look at homosexuality as a forbidden issue (Trevissan, 2000; Silva, 2006). Although the growing visibility of the LGBT (lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender) movement in Brazil, the gay community still haven’t achieved the same rights as the heterosexual mainstream. The way in which homosexuality is addressed in Brazil has drastically changed. However the topic is still considered with reservations by society and the State. Intolerance, jokes, homophobia, and even physical violence are still present in the reality of homosexuals in Brazil.

Individuals who perceive and accept the homosexual identity may be considered as marked by carriers of a socially stigmatized identity (Goffman, 1988). Stigma is related to a social sign of inferiority, apparent or not, that a dominant group imposes on another. In a society that discriminates against homosexuality, individuals who perceive and accept the homosexual identity may be considered carriers of a socially stigmatized identity (Goffman, 1988). This stigma has a direct influence on the social relations of individuals and, consequently, on their consumer relations.

The approach by Goffman (1988) to stigma is closely related to the identity issue. From a culturalist viewpoint, the term identity is associated with how people perceive themselves and the groups with which they identify (Woodward, 2000). According to Bauman (2005), identity concerns not only the answer to the question “Who am I”, but also its credibility and stability, which would never be possible to achieve without strong and stable connections with other people. Identity makes absolutely no sense at all without the notion of difference—there is, actually, a dialectic relationship between these two concepts: identity and difference. The identity concept lies in the relationship with an “other”, something or someone “I am not”.

The purpose of this study is to understand how gay males in Rio de Janeiro use the discourse associated with their possessions to deal with the stigma related with the homosexual identity. The presence of stigma is directly associated with the view of the homosexual as “not normal”. Foucault (1988) argues that both the homosexual identity and related stigma are social constructions imposed by a medical discourse produced in the 19th century.

This study adopts the constructionist view in which meanings in the social world are the result of historic and cultural developments, and as such, are constructed and modified through human interaction (Berger & Luckman, 1966). Therefore, to understand the social reality of a gay group, it is necessary to understand the social and cultural organization in which the members of this group interact, communicate, produce and modify the meanings of the world in which they live. Accordingly, ethnography was adopted as a research method. In order to conduct such study, one of the authors of this work was immersed in gay everyday life of Rio de Janeiro city from October 2006 until March 2007. Three major categories raised from field observations: (i) territoriality, (ii) sense of community, and (iii) consumer resistance.

Although there is no gay village in Rio de Janeiro, the Ipanema neighborhood is perceived as a “gay friendly” area by gays. Furthermore, most clubs, bars and stores positioned to gay consumers are located in this area. One of informants said: “I used to come to Ipanema beach because I feel free here. Now I live in Ipanema, I shop and hang out with my friends here”. As long as they free of the stigma, they feel free to live and consume.

The sense of belongingness to a gay community seems central to the stigma imposed by mainstream society. Many informants said that making purchases in “friendly gay” business is a way to support and develop the gay community. Regarding informants made special efforts in stressing their community identity by supporting gay positive products and business and boycotting the homophobic ones, which suggests a sort of consumer resistance. Such behavior is related to patterns of consumption that defy what is considered normal by the heteronormative segments of society. In addition to the resistance to the mainstream ideology, gay consumers in Rio de Janeiro rely heavily on the alternatives available in the marketplace to build their own identity.

The author would like to thanks the support from Conselho Nacional de Pesquisa Cientifica (CNPq)
Most studies on socially excluded group’s focus basically on the dimension of a discriminated and excluded minority, neutralizing other dimensions such as that of “consumers”. Although this consumer feature may be regarded as an instrument which facilitates the manipulation of the gay group, we believe that this instrumentality can also be used to help the gay group cope with the stigma socially imposed upon them.

References

I Feel Bad, Buy, Feel the Pain and Buy Again: Cases Studies of Compulsive Buyers
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Compulsive consumption is a disorder that affects many individuals in a world in which materialistic culture and intrusive marketing campaigns place the consumers all the time with “temptations” to buy. In Brazil, the volume of credit has reached about 34% of the Brazilian GDP and the level of debts has achieved alarming levels (Procon 2007). In addition, the relative stability in the Brazilian economy encourages companies to open credit for consumers, who often make their buying decision based on the value of each payment and does not even ask for the interest rates.

This condition of “easy” access to money in Brazil in the last years is the background in which the aspect of compulsive consumption manifests. This behavior and the related factors have been studied worldwide both in the field of Marketing (Faber and O’Guinn 1988; Hill and Kozup 2007) and Psychology/Psychiatry (e.g. Park, Cho and Seo 2006). Even though there have been studies in the marketing field investigating the characteristics and antecedents of compulsive buying, such as compulsive personality and low self-esteem, the reasons why some consumers are more likely to buy compulsively than others are still not well known by consumer researchers.

Moreover, there has been a lack of attention for the family issues and the history of life of the compulsive buyer in the marketing science. There are few studies investigating the consumer in a family system and how the process of interaction with the family can contribute to the compulsive buying behavior. The existing studies (e.g., Rindfleisch, Burroughs and Denton 1997; Roberts, Manolis and Tanner 2006) usually consider family structure only by whether spouses are divorced or not. Thus, by borrowing a broader view of ‘family structure’ from the family therapy theory and practice (Minuchin and Fishman 1981), the analysis of the compulsive buying behavior could be enhanced by new insights.

In terms of methodological approach, this study used the method of multiple-case studies. Two of the authors has been working with family therapy for many years and selected a clinical sample of nine cases in order to investigate the variables related to compulsive consumption. The main source of evidence was the archival records owned by the authors, who were treating these individuals as patients of therapy. Also, as these authors have worked with most of the patients for one year or more, the cases are well known by them.

Each case was reviewed and analyzed by the therapists. Complementing the archival records, further information was provided by the therapist who was treating the specific cases. Six of the nine cases received co-therapy (i.e. a reflective team of four therapists and one psychiatrist). The central themes that emerged in this discussion are presented in this study.

We noticed that the family was a central aspect in all of the discussion. Most of the themes are connected to the relationship of the consumer with his/her family. This is in agreement with previous elaboration that the family structure has an influence on compulsive consumption (Rindfleisch, Burroughs and Denton 1997). For example, the lack of control in the expenses by a spouse triggered conflicts between them. A conflict in itself is a major motivation for spouses to look for family therapy. But the root of these conflicts might be based in a number of factors and the aspect of consumption disorder might be among of them.

Another relevant theme related to the family was that there are cases in which someone in the family system is benefited from the compulsive buyer disorder. For example, it was noticed that a husband was spending high amounts of money and criticizing the wife for not being able to get home without a new possession. This is named as the circularity of the symptoms.

The theme of a secret in the family of origin was also a relevant one. It was noticed that in some of the analyzed cases the individual was not sure about the true father figure. Related to this theme is the one of childhood without the presence of the father. Indeed, recent
research has suggested that there is a relationship between the childhood socialization process and the adult ability to control impulses (Decker et al. 2006).

Moreover, compulsive buyers analyzed here had similarities with those presented in previous studies (d’Astous, Maltais and Roberge 1990; Faber and O’Guinn 1989, 1992), regarding lack of social interaction, incapacity to deal with negative states and crises, and sentiment of guiltiness after compulsive buying behavior.

There has been a demand for consumer research “for” consumers. This has indeed been a neglected aspect of consumer research. It seems fair that consumers also benefit from “marketing knowledge”. This is the case of those consumers who have a consumption disorder. As this individual lives around other people (e.g., parents, spouse and/or/sons), this disorder can be triggered by a number of variables in this system. Also the compulsive behavior might be a stimulus for a series of other responses, like divorce, conflicts between spouses and family members, and financial collapse. Thus, a consumption disorder like compulsive buying can have serious harmful effects on our society. This is why consumer researchers might be interested in investigating the main aspects of the disorder and help the consumers to overcome the problems. We show in the case studies that a compulsive consumption disorder is not an isolated symptom, but it is part of a system that produced this problem. When consumers are able to go back and look at the forces of this system, together with a professional (e.g. a therapist), he/she could be in better condition to (i) understand how a symptom is a reflection of the system that was built over the years, and (ii) learn a new model of relating with his/her system and with consumption.

References


Cultural Values and Leisure Activities Preferences Among Latin American Young Consumers. An Exploratory Study

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Leisure is defined as any pleasant activity willingly chosen for non-workable time. It is a period of time characterized by activities and practices willingly chosen in accordance with the preferences of each individual, activities which fulfill personal needs and whose goal at last may be rest, fun, creativity, self-indulgence or self-development (Cotte & Ratneshwar, 2003).

Unger and Kernan (1983) identified three general characteristics of enjoyment of leisure time: intrinsic satisfaction, perceived freedom of action, and involvement or absorption in an activity. For this, some claims that is on leisure time when people settle their identities, both, personal and as a collective (Rodríguez & Aguülló, 1999).

How leisure time is managed and which activities are preferred, is a socially conditioned process, in which culture performs a key role (Kim et al, 2005; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000). De Mooij (2004) showed that in Europe, money spent in different leisure activities were related to varying cultural dimensions, using Hofstede (1980) framework. Expenditures on paid organized leisure activities were higher in individualistic cultures (Sweden, UK), than in collectivist cultures (Spain, Portugal), where people’s free time it’s spent mainly...
with family and relatives. Relevant individualistic values are pleasure, stimulation, variety and adventure, so the sale of pleasure products and services such as travel, theme parks and cultural events (e.g. theater, concerts, opera) tend to be higher in individualistic than in collectivists cultures (De Mooij, 2004).

Although youth tend to perform similar activities in their free time, typical of their age, each nation’s inherent conditions—specifically the predominant culture—play an important role in the manifested degree of preference of certain leisure activities (Mosses, 2000). Hence, the preferences associated with leisure activities practiced by youngsters should reflect dominant cultural priorities. Our aim is to find some evidence about this, thus, the main purposes of this research were to: 1) learn about the preferences of leisure activities in a sample of young residents from selected LA countries; and 2) the role played in these preferences by national cultural elements, such as values, which we suspect have an important role on how leisure time is used.

Literature shows values are the most important factors that form the foundation of the national culture (Hofstede, 1980; Rockeach, 1973; Smith and Schwartz, 1997). Values are considered a standard of socially accepted rules giving the residents of a country a framework on what behavior is appropriate, to guide self presentation and to justify their choices to others. Affecting the formation of attitudes of individuals and theirs behaviors (Lee, 1993: Unger, 1995; Watson et al, 2002). The Schwartz’s value theory (1994,1999, 2006), served us as a conceptual framework for analyzing national cultures. This relatively new approach is based on a list of ‘universal’ values that characterize and help to distinguish various aspects of national cultures.

915 young residents of several main cities from Argentina, Colombia, Venezuela and Mexico, university attendees (managerial careers), between the ages of 18 and 29, both sexes, were interviewed. Research was conducted between June 2004 and October 2005. A self-applied questionnaire divided in two main sections was posted on a web site. The first section contained a list of 46 values (Schwartz Value Inventory, SVI), each one were rated according to how important is as a “life guideline”. Second section contained a list of 34 leisure activities that were evaluated according as “the most you like to practice”.

Factorial and reliability analysis applied on SVI, gave us 7 cultural values indexes by country: Hierarchy, Conservation, Mastery, Harmony, Egalitarian Commitment, Affective Individualism and Intellectual Individualism. Based on this 7 value types, a Cultural Value Profile for each nation was obtained. The media ratings of each type of value were used to compare each country’s cultural values priorities.

From the list of 34 leisure activities only 30 of them were useful for comparisons, according to reliability test. A national leisure rank was constructed with preferences experienced by these activities. Cross-country comparisons were conducted, making it possible to understand the relative importance give of each leisure activities by country.

Significant differences or similarities across nations were studied by descriptive analyses with SPAD. DEMOD procedure and Fischer Test (ANOVA) were applied on the national scores attributed to the 7 cultural values index and the list of 30 leisure activities, this gave us evidence on the relevance of certain cultural values types and some kinds of leisure activities that are revealed as the most typical in each national sample.

Countries showed characteristic cultural and leisure profiles when compared among them. In Argentina, Egalitarian Commitment was the most characteristics value type; in Colombia, Affective Individualism and Hierarchy; Affective Individualism and Mastery in Mexico and Conservation and Mastery in Venezuela. “Read”, “spend time with my family”, “go to the theatre / opera / ballet / museums”, “drink beer / wine / spirits” and “go out with friends” were among the activities that characterized more the preferences use of leisure time of young Argentines. Among Colombians, activities such as “Go to exclusive clubs”, “go to shopping malls”, “playing video games”, “going to parties”, “watch music videos” were the most distinctive. In Mexico, “See a play / opera / ballet / museums”, “sports”, “go out with friends”, “shoot”, “listen to music charts”. In Venezuela: “watching reality shows”, “watching music videos”, “listen to music charts”, “talking on the phone”.

Culture value priorities helped to explain those differences on leisure characteristics profiles by country. In each nation, strong links between characteristic cultural value types and distinctive leisure activities were found using correlation matrix.

Those results suggest the theoretical framework proposed by Schwartz can help marketers to explain how similarities or differences are, at cultural level, the LA nations. Most importantly, this approach also can be used for understanding how important cultural value priorities are when marketing leisure products, services and activities among LA youth. Research on values can illuminate critical marketing dimensions related to advertising and product positioning in leisure markets in LA region.

References


Environmental Barriers to Consumer Acculturation
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Abstract

Acculturation is a hot topic that has been looked at in different ways in consumer research. Although many lessons have been learned from previous investigations, the impact of the environment where the consumer acculturation is taking place has been relatively overlooked. We propose a factor in the environment that may influence the consumer acculturation process: government policy. We contribute to consumer acculturation literature by examining how the political environment may impact the acculturation process of immigrant groups. The context we use to better understand this phenomenon is a southern state in the U.S. with a large population of Hispanic immigrants.

“Mass international migrations to countries that promise economic, social, and political prosperity has created ethnic communities that are lucrative targets for many businesses.”


Understanding immigrants and their consumption is strategically important for marketers because immigrants comprise an increasingly large part of developed countries’ populations. According to the Census Bureau, as of 2005, there were more than 35 million immigrants in the US. That is 2.5 times the number of immigrants during the last great immigration wave in 1910 (Center for Immigration Studies 2005).

In the pursuit of the understanding of immigrant consumer behavior, a process called consumer acculturation has been widely discussed in marketing literature. Consumer acculturation has been defined as a “general term that encompasses intercultural interaction and adaptation and includes assimilation of a new culture, maintenance of the old culture, and resistance to both new and old cultures” (Peñaloza and Gilly 1999).

Acculturation has been looked at in several different ways. Consumer acculturation has been studied as a process of cultural swapping (Oswald 1999; Peñaloza 1994), the process that a foreign group engages in transitioning into the consumption patterns of the host culture. It has been argued that the mixing of two ethnic groups may end up in the creation of a new cultural consumption identity altogether (Askegaard et al. 2005; Jamal and Chapman 2000). Some scholars (e.g., Jamal and Chapman 2000; Thompson and Tambyah 1999; Ustuner and Holt 2007; Wilson 2007) have investigated the specific consumption patterns of individuals in an acculturation process.

Although many lessons have been learned from previous investigations, the impact of the environment where the consumer acculturation is taking place has been relatively overlooked. Most of the previous models of acculturation assume that consumers may act and consume freely. Previous models also assume that the interaction between the host and immigrant groups is restricted only by their own cultural differences (e.g., taste, language, preferences, etc). There are a few exceptions, however. For example, Ustuner and Holt (2007) mention that social pressures force some consumers to buy certain things. Peñaloza (1994) mentions in her consumer acculturation model that the environment is an antecedent for the acculturation process, but she focuses on language barriers and the like. We propose that there is another factor in the environment that may influence the consumer acculturation process: government policy.

We contribute to the consumer acculturation literature by examining how the political environment may impact the acculturation process of immigrant groups. We hope to better understand how immigration policy may alter the acculturation process by means such as altering consumption restrictions, discrimination perceptions, and reducing the interaction between host and foreign country groups. According to previous models (e.g., Oswald 1999; Peñaloza 1994), this interaction enhances the consumer acculturation process.

Methods

The context we use to better understand this phenomenon is a southern state in the U.S. with a large population of Hispanic immigrants where immigration policy has recently developed into what many of those Hispanics view as “anti-Hispanic” (Bell 2007b). This policy reserves the right for officers to racially profile drivers in order to question them as to their legal status, and the policy includes large fines for transporting any undocumented immigrant (Bell 2007a). Semi-structured depth interviews are used to investigate the impact this policy is having on their acculturation process. We explore areas of healthcare, education, housing, travel, etc.
Initial Results

After initial interviews with community leaders, we found that from their point of view, immigration policy was playing a role in the acculturation process. One employer noted that “They can’t even leave their house without thinking about the chance of being sent home.” An advertising manager for a local Hispanic newspaper noted that “Policy changes everything, where to live, who to be friends with, where to go.” Conversations with actual immigrants have uncovered a similar pattern. An oilfield hand who has been working in the US for 6 years noted that (translated) “I cannot even take my friends to buy groceries at the store.” This research will help understand this phenomenon.

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Trust, Value and Loyalty in Relational Exchanges between Students and Higher Education Institutions

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Many scholars have tried to model the processes by which consumers maintain relational exchanges with firms and how these processes are linked to customer loyalty. What seems to emerge as a common ground in this stream of research is that consumer trust plays a central role in fostering successful relational exchanges. In other words, consumer trust has proven to be positively and directly related to customer loyalty. Morgan and Hunt (1994), pioneers in this area, developed and successfully tested a model in which relationship commitment and consumer trust are presented as key mediators in successful relational exchanges. They defend that customers with strong relationships with providers have higher levels of trust and commitment, and that trust and commitment occupy a central role in the formation of their attitude towards those providers. Similarly, Garbarino and Johnson (1999) proposed and tested a model that puts consumer trust and commitment as central intermediate constructs between consumers’ attitudes and future intentions that aim to explain successful relational exchanges for customers who have a high relational orientation to the provider. Most recently, Sirdeshmukh, Singh and Sabol (2002) proposed a model that uses a multidimensional conceptualization of trustworthiness divided into two main fronts (frontline employees and management policies and practices) and presents value as a key mediator between customer trust and loyalty. They tested their model in two different service contexts: retail clothing and nonbusiness airline travel. They found that consumers’ appraisals of the behavior of frontline employees and the practices and policies of management, both evaluated in terms of competency, benevolence, and problem solving, were related to consumer trust in the provider under consideration for both service contexts examined. Further, value completely mediates the relationship between trust in the frontline employees and loyalty in the retail clothing context and partially mediates the relationship between management policies and practices and loyalty in the nonbusiness airline travel context.

Although the role of consumer trust in enhancing relational exchanges has occupied a prominent position in the minds of practitioners and marketing academics, a lot still needs to be done to validate frameworks that attempt to model the trust-loyalty relationship and are sensitive to contextual differences. For instance, one of the major gaps of most of the studies that try to model relational exchanges is that they might have limited generalizability. Indeed, many authors acknowledge this limitation in their studies (e.g.: Crosby, Evans, and Cowles, 1990; Sirdeshmukh, Singh and Sabol’s 2002). However, generalizability is something that can be easily accomplished by replication studies (Easley, Madden, and Dunn, 2000). Easley, Madden, and Dunn (2000) posit that “theory development and refinement have suffered from the lack of an explicit replication tradition in research” (pg. 83).

The primary objective of this research is to replicate the trust-value-loyalty model for relational exchange developed by Sirdeshmukh, Singh and Sabol’s (2002) by addressing some of the most important limitations presented by the authors in their original article. First, it aims to test the generalizability of the original study by testing the model in the context of HEIs (instead of retail clothing and nonbusiness airline travel) in a different cultural context (in Brazil instead of the United States) and at a different time (four years after the original article was published). Second, it attempts to reduce any sample size bias that might have occurred in the original study. The sample used in the
The results suggest that trust in both the HEI’s faculty and staff members and in the HEI’s administrative and process policies and practices increase students’ perception of value of the HEIs, which in turn leads to student loyalty. In addition, it suggests that the impact of trust (in the HEI’s personnel) on student loyalty is more extensive than the impact it has on perceived value. That is, it captures the effect that the social roles that instructors have in the students’ lives as well.

Besides validating Sirdeshmukh, Singh and Sabol’s trust-value-loyalty model to be used in the context of HEIs, the current research contributes to prior research on relational exchanges involving HEIs by extending recent work conducted by Ghosh, Whipple, and Bryan (2001), and by Hennig-Thurai, Langer, and Hansen (2001), as it demonstrates the important role that student trust can have in the formation of student loyalty. Specifically, student trust is considered to be a multidimensional construct that can be divided into two major facets, those of HEI’s management and HEI’s personnel, and which develops while students are active members of an HEI.

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Technology in Low-income Consumers: An Ethnographical Perspective

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As opposed to other fast moving consumer goods, technological products are developed and replaced at a very fast rate, for which huge investments on R&D are required (Viardot, 1998). Thus, the importance of knowing the technological market is determined upon how fast it evolves. As defined by Arnal (2002), technological market is composed by dynamic, short-lived products, which incorporate innovation originating changes not only in market but also on consumers.

Previous research conducted by Behairy et al (2006) explored the use of technology by youth consumers, ranging in ages between 18-25 years old, in order to determine patterns in their use of technology as a means of communication. He found that the main motive for youth consumers to use technology pertains to their need for connectedness. As state by Venkatesh, (1996) people are now exposed to more computerization than ever before as part of their routine daily experiences. Moreover, Hoffman et al (2004) found that Internet has become indispensable to people in their daily lives and that the Internet has become so embedded in the daily fabric of people’s lives that they simply cannot live without it.

So, it is interesting to understand the place of technology in modern times, exploring practical and symbolic aspects of the interaction between people and technological devices, and the way they are integrated in the social network.

In Venezuela, recent research evidences that technology has made an impact on the different social classes, even spreading up to those low-income or popular strata against the false belief that only high-income consumers have access to technology, (including Internet) (DATANALISIS, 2007). Specifically, Internet shows a 15.3% level of penetration in Venezuela on 2006, and 67% of these users belong to the D and E social strata (the lowest social strata) (Tendencias Digitales, 2006).

According to DATANALISIS, in Venezuela the low-income consumers represent 81% of the Venezuelan population, out of which 46% belongs to E income levels (DATANALISIS, 2007). Regardless of this fact, the interest of low-income consumers is new and it is scarcely mentioned in marketing books.

When realizing that low-income consumers group accesses different telecommunication and IT services in their everyday life (DATANALISIS, 2007), it turns out to be critical to understand the system of meanings that low-income consumers weave around technology.

Ethnography has been rediscovered as a discipline in marketing research due to its power for providing very detailed information using a mix of both observational and interviewing tactics, to record behavioral dynamics (Mariampolski, 2006). Ethnography relies on entering respondent’s natural world, home, offices, streets, stores where people live, eat, shop, work or play. This allows marketers, manufacturers and researchers to approach customers into their natural environment, allowing them to obtain first-hand information regarding aspirations, wishes, frustrations and limitations about products or services under evaluation.

The ethnographical approach is a discipline stemming from culture as an organizing concept which evidences its role with the choice, usage or rejection to certain products or services and clarifies both shared reference framework and system of meanings among individuals (Mariampolski, 2006). Furthermore, it renders itself as an extremely useful methodology when there is research in which the cultural factor is a relevant variable as expected in research about low-income consumers who, according to preceding works in other countries, show an identity of their own among the number of individuals of a nation (Mariano y Castillo, 2002).

In June 2007, we carried out a qualitative research work using an ethnographic approach in Caracas, Venezuela. The main purpose of this research was to deeply understand how low-income people specifically those from E social class perceive communication and IT’s as well as understands how technologies are inserted in their daily lives.

Among the main findings it is worth mentioning the critical role of technologies in low-income consumers’ everyday life, as technology allows them to access world-wide information, as well as it offers safety and it is even a means of making some extra earnings.

Cell phones are used not only for communication: for most of the low income users this is an indispensable tool for their lives. It is considered a key resource for work, because many of the people of smaller resources use the equipment as its office and a single call can solve a work day. Therefore, sometimes it is more important for people to keep them creditless but to have balance in their cell phones.

Also, this equipment gives them security, status, and even allows until socializing and coexisting in friendly surroundings.

Important barriers exist like the high price of the equipment that limits the possibilities of low-income consumers of changing the one that they have for a more appealing one. Also, for many of them, to maintain the service active is but that costs above and for others.
The computer is usually viewed as a tool for connecting Internet, thanks to which they can study, have fun and communicate. In those homes where there are computers without Internet access, this single one has precise applications related to school and work activities. However, in those homes where there is a computer and come from not having Internet access to have it, an increase in the use frequency is observed, emphasizing that some of the members of the family express interest and use the computer as a leisure activity.

Among those that do not have home Internet access, getting online at an Internet-café is the usual thing, or even at friends’ homes. Then, an Internet-café is perceived like a social meeting point, where groups of children that participate in online games, young that are going to chat with friends who live in other places and adult people in search of useful information and news converge. Even though an Internet-café is a shared space, social or individual micro-nucleus are created.

The closest social network–conformed by relatives, friends and workmates–propitiate the initial knowledge of Internet. People who work at Internet cafés (called cyber in Venezuela) play a very important role in the initial learning, as advanced.

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Vanity and Consumption: How Physical Vanity Influences the Consumer Behavior
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The vanity concept has been widely discussed by men since ancient times, present from the Narcism myth to the Snow White fairy tale, even though it has been almost entirely despised by the academy. Vanity has been usually seen as an exaggerated sense of self esteem, most of times related to the ostentation of physical beauty or an excessive pride concerning achievements. In the context of contemporary society, amused by the spectacular, the aesthetics, and the seduction, the logic of fashion is becoming the dominant way of life (Lipovetsky 2004). The consumption of products and services motivated by symbolic value transferences is more common then ever before, what is clearly seen by the nonstop growing of the beauty market and its plastic surgeries, cosmetics, adornments, and others. This context only reinforces the importance of the vanity concept, defined in the consumer research literature as a concern for physical appearance, a positive (and perhaps inflated) view of physical appearance, a concern for achievement and, a positive (perhaps inflated) view of achievement (Netemeyer, Burton, and Lichtenstein 1995). It is remarkable that the only three papers published in main consumer behavior journals about the vanity concept limited its scopes to the development and test of a valid scale to measure the presence of vanity on individuals (Durvasula, Lysonsky, and Watson 2001; Netemeyer, Burton, and Lichtenstein 1995; Wang and Waller 2006). We believe that due to the little scientific knowledge produced about the subject, especially when compared to its present social and commercial importance, a more careful study of the vanity in the market context is urgent and necessary. The focus chosen for this investigation is extreme, best type of research context for a considerable new academic topic: the study of the relations between the physical female vanity and consumption. So it is the objective of the current research to understand how the physical female vanity influences the consumption of beauty products and services, or more precisely, how women demonstrate and reinforce their vanity and their sense of self through consumption strategies (Askegaard 2002). The goal established takes the research toward an interpretative paradigm, one that tries to comprehend behaviors from a referential frame and a system of ideas, traditionally identified with relativistic methodologies (Calder and Tybout 1987). Following this orientation, a qualitative design able to understand the thoughts, feelings and behaviors from a phenomenological standpoint, and also capture the social and cultural context of the phenomenon under study, is required (Schouten 1991). The hermeneutical approach was the elected, based on the understanding that all consciousness is essentially linguistic (Arnould and Fischer 1994), being the human speech a reflection of the lived cultural experiences adapted to the unique context of one’s particular life (Thompson, Polio, and Locander 1994). So the research design proposed for the data collection is the long interview (Mc Cracken 1988), a qualitative interview that brings together a non directive perspective, identified with the phenomenology, and a cultural topic guide, useful for the hermeneutical analysis. This topic guide was taken from the reading of cultural texts, that is, advertisements of beauty products and services in women magazine. The sample consisted of eight young women ranging from 21 to 28 years old, all with similar economical and cultural backgrounds, in order to facilitate the interpretation of this relatively new consumer research phenomenon. The results point to a quite interesting direction, linking physical vanity and consumption to a social and cultural dimension. To begin explaining what that means we must have a look at Vacker and Key (1993) theory of the beauty in the market, in which beauty definition depends on a subject, an object, and someone to judge it. In other words, the definition of what is beautiful depends, at least to some degree, on a social dimension. This socially perceived beauty have personal consequences, demonstrated by the social psychology research tradition called psychology of beauty. Many studies showed that individuals considered prettier tend to be seen as more successful and better people than less attractive ones (Domzal and Kernan 1993).
This desire to be beautiful when combined with personal values and social comparison originates a self perception about one’s appearance. Apart from this self view there’s another element which is the ideal of beauty, motivated, in part, by the what is beautiful is good logic, exposed above. When comparing the self concept with the beauty goal, women generally see a difference that causes dissatisfaction and preoccupation. In this perspective, the consumption is a way to reduce the distance between the self and the ideal of beauty by changing someone’s physical appearance for the best. The most common consumption strategies used in this case are the ones able to manage the impression caused on others, like clothes consumption, plastic surgery, cosmetics, adornments, and beauty services in general. Since all this process have deep social foundations, the relation between the self and the body with others is constantly monitored by a feedback system based on compliments and social achievements associated with a good physical appearance. The output of the vanity system just described is a continuum ranging from the balanced vanity in the positive end to the extreme vanity in the negative end. The positive side is related to the concept of self love, self esteem and well being, on the other hand the negative side is almost a psychological disorder, causing feelings of shame and anxiety, and generating obsessive behaviors such as compulsive buying. So far, the study has taken us up to here, still needing finer tuning to be ready. As the results unfold we are able to find a suitable place for the research in the consumer research area, avoiding what Hubbard and Lindsay (2002) called the cult of isolated studies. The research on physical vanity is important to (1) extend the knowledge about the theories of beauty in the market and (2) contribute to the projects of consumer identity in the consumer culture theory defended by Arnould and Thompson (2005). Observing the growing value given to the appearance and the image in our society, we expect that this small research effort one day becomes a strong and traditional research line.

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Scream Out Loud or Lie on the Couch? Investigating the Experience of Watching Football on the Stadium versus on TV
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Driven by sports related media, the growth of Olympic sports, particularly football, demonstrates the commercial dimension of sports. During the 2006 Germany Football World Cup, matches were watched by 3 billion TV viewers around the world. The growing offer of live football matches on TV did not have a significant impact on the number of tickets sold for championship matches, which had a little oscillation during the past 20 years. On the opposite, demand for low priced tickets has been quite stable over the years, which indicates a sort of complementarity between the TV and the football field: the first provides essential information to the viewer, teaching him how to watch a football match, while the second reinforces and translates such learning with personal experience.

Despite sharing the same content, both products—TV and live football—are quite different concerning its messages, narratives, and perceived values. This work aims to investigate the spectator narratives associated with live football and TV football broadcasting. Its main objective is to understand how the football field experience and the TV experience a failure by spectators. Another objective discuss the difference between the narratives of the field–predominantly aesthetic–and TV–predominantly didactic–experiences.

The conceptual framework provided by Holbrook (1999) will be used to describe the different forms of fruition and evaluation of sport. Using the interviewing approach proposal by McCracken (1988), it was possible to dive in each of 16 subjects’ personal history and experienced narratives are related to life and sports practice and consumption. Interviews were focused on subjects experiences with
The Connection between Symbolic Benefits and Youth Identity: A Hybrid Methodological Approach

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Abstract

Although the construction of our individual or social identity has been investigated by a number of disciplines, its highly changeable nature requires a continuous investigation. In this paper we seek to analyse the connection between the symbolic benefits of consumption and the formation of identity among the youth. Data collection was carried out through interviews, an auto driving technique and a survey. We found four factors of variables that explain the relationship among identity and symbolic benefits: (1) Self-satisfaction and status achievement; (2) Social acceptance/belonging and relationships; (3) Attachment and importance and (4) Identification and memory.

Introduction

Nowadays, to talk about identity certainly means to rephrase Shakespeare and ask, ‘To have or not to have? That’s the question.’ Easy access to a wide range of products and services, all plenty of symbolic meaning fully explored by the media, force us to try to have a better understanding on how possession of goods and their use construct our identities. Although the construction of our individual or social identity has been investigated by a number of disciplines, its highly changeable nature requires a continuous investigation. In this paper we seek to analyse the connection between the symbolic benefits of consumption and the formation of identity among the youth.
Belk (1988) provided the basis and also arose the interest among researchers in trying to understand how the consumption of goods help people to define who they are, as these goods are seen as part of the individuals themselves. The same goods help individuals to see such a possession in terms of an emotional state, a social status and even a whole lifestyle (MCCracken, 2003). Consumption brings us two major perspectives, the utilitarian and the symbolic ones. In the past, theoretical works treated the issue of consumption from the perspective of the utilitarian economic theory (Ouchi, 2000). Since the work developed by Veblen (1965), Baudrillard (1993; 1995) and Sahlins (2003) there has been an emphasis on the symbolisms of consumption practices. People consume goods for a series of reasons. Some of the most common reasons is to obtain social status and prestige, to express cultural values, to fulfil physical and emotional needs and, mainly, to reinforce their own identity (Ouchi, 2000).

Works on the relation between consumer goods and the self, such as the ones developed by Belk, 1988; Lamont and Molnár, 2001; Ahuvia, 2005, have a exploratory nature. However, there are not descriptive studies that approach the connection between the symbolic benefits and the construction of identity among young consumers—at least, as far as the reviewed bibliography is considered. In spite of the importance of symbolism to consumption, there has been little effort to develop a framework to analyse symbolic consumption and there are very few empiric studies on the field (Hirschman, 1981). Therefore, this study represents an opportunity to enhance the understanding on the symbolic benefits of consumption and the creation of identity among young consumers, as far as it applies a less usual methodological approach to the topic.

Methodology

Two methodological approaches were used in this study, a qualitative and a quantitative one. The qualitative approach aimed at collecting information regarding the relationship of consumers with their acquired goods and the impact of these goods on their identity. Data collection was carried out through interviews and the auto driving technique. Both techniques were used with young subjects between the ages of 15 and 18. The questions involved an investigation of consumers’ habits, the kinds of products that reflect their self-image and the way subjects choose products and brands. The auto driving technique comprised young consumers talk about their intentions and behaviour referring to photographs taken by themselves (Heisley e Levy, 1991). Each subject took five photos of objects they consider to identify themselves. Content analysis of the interviews was carried out by two independent coders. Based on the results of the qualitative research and the literature, we designed the questionnaire. We carried out a pilot survey with 203 young students to verify the validity of the questionnaire and the need of chances on it. After that, there was another survey with 288 young secondary students in six cities in the south of Brazil.

Results

Factor analysis resulted in the finding of a KMO of 0.861 and a Barlett test result of qui-square 1888.056 and 0.000 significance. We found four factors with values bigger than 1, which are responsible for 60.34% of the explained variation. All the variables presented factor loadings over 0.4. From the 20 initial variables, 17 were kept. The Cronbach alpha found to the scale was of 0.835. Variables were grouped according to four factors: (1) Self-satisfaction and status achievement: includes variables that help consumer to feel different, better, more self-confident and to acquire the identity they want; (2) Social acceptance/belonging and relationships: variables linked to the use of goods that make the individual feel part of a group and even to make friends and allure other people; (3) Attachment and importance: variables that translate the importance objects have in people’s lives and the attachment (especially the emotional one) people have to objects and (4) Identification and memory: variables that demonstrate the capacity of objects of representing different things and people.

Based on the results, we observe that more than a simple preference for certain objects, there is a special sense of attachment and dependence. The relationship between the symbolic benefits of consumption and the formation of the identity of young individuals was demonstrated in the two stages of the research. A young girl who wears the same kind of clothes and the same brands that the most popular girls at school is in fact trying to achieve group acceptance and building her identity as a ‘popular’ girl as well. Wearing a famous brand or a product also used by one’s friends can produce a sensation of security since the individual feels as belonging to a group with shared consumer patterns and shared symbols. It helps the youth to feel more confident and to reinforce his/her identity.

The variables related to the symbolic benefits found in this study confirm results obtained by other researchers like Ouchi (2000) and Piacentini e Mailer (2004). However, unlike these authors, we identified similar symbolic benefits for more than one category of products, simultaneously. Considering this, the major contribution of this work is to evidence the possibility of having access to this content using a quantitative technique. Consequently, the use of such variables and the respective factors, such as the ones we found in the market segmentation process or advertising strategic definition, seem to be realistic.

References


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Ouchi, Cristina Sayuri Côrtes (2000), O global e o local na construção da identidade: um estudo em Marketing e Antropologia de adolescentes. Dissertação (Mestrado em Administração)–Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, COPPEAD.
Past research has shown that consumers’ perceptions of product quality can be affected by the country of origin of the product. Recent research suggests that brands can be affected not only by country-of-origin effects, but by the general affect one feels towards a country (Maheswaran and Chen 2006). Positive (negative) affect towards a country can transfer to brands that originate from that country, resulting in positive (negative) brand evaluations. Certainly the actions of a country can influence affect, whether it is from being involved in a military conflict or giving aid to a neighboring country. This study examines perceptions of Middle East consumers on American credit card brands depending on their attributions of U.S. actions in Iraq (situational vs. representative). In addition, the relative salience of the brand as being from the U.S (salient vs. ambiguous) and the relative message strength (strong vs. weak) of the brand description are examined to determine the overall effect on brand evaluations.

Participants were randomly assigned to conditions in a 2 (attribution type: representative vs. situational) x 2 (salience of country of origin: highly salient vs. ambiguous) x 2 (message strength: strong and weak) between-subjects design. Participants began by writing an essay on the United States’ involvement in the Middle East. Participants were then asked to evaluate a credit card brand relative to other prominent credit card brands based on a product comparison from a fictitious third-party source. They were then asked for their overall opinion on the credit card brand. After answering several manipulation check questions, participants were debriefed.

The attribution condition was manipulated by asking those in the representative attribution condition to write about how the United States’ involvement was representative of American aggression in the Middle East and by asking those in the situational condition to write about how the involvement was due to situational factors. The salience of the country of origin was manipulated by using American Express as the salient American brand and Visa as the ambiguous American brand. Finally, message strength was manipulated by claiming the credit card brand was superior on four important attributes and inferior on four unimportant attributes for the “strong” condition and as superior on four unimportant attributes and inferior on four important attributes for the “weak” condition. Manipulation checks verified that participants in the representative attribution group rated higher agreement with the statement, “The war in Iraq is a typical example of American hostility against Arab countries,” ($M_{rep}$= 5.62) than participants in the situational condition ($M_{sit}$=4.58), $t(71)=2.944$, $p<.005$. American Express was confirmed as being more salient (recognized as American 99% of the time) than Visa (recognized as American 64% of the time) as being an American brand, $(t(73)=5.95$, $p<.001)$. Finally, regarding the message strength manipulation, participants rated the brand under the strong message condition as being superior than the brand under the weak message when compared to other leading credit card brands ($M_{strong}=5.78$ compared to $M_{weak}=3.94$, $t(71)=11.17$, $p<.001$).

The dependent variable was an evaluation index that came from three evaluation items. An ANOVA on the evaluation index yielded a significant main effect for message strength ($F(1, 64)=4.37$, $p<.05$) and a significant three-way (attribution type by country-of-origin salience by message strength) interaction ($F(1, 64)=5.07$, $p<.05$).

With respect to the three-way interaction, under the strong message condition there was an attribution type by country-of-origin salience interaction ($F(1, 31)=4.61$, $p<.05$). Evaluations were significantly higher for the salient brand in the situational condition ($M=6.07$) than in the representative condition ($M=4.80$), $t(17)=3.245$, $p<.01$, but there was no difference in evaluations for the nonsalient brand between the two attribution conditions ($t(17)=33$, $p>.70$). Under the weak message condition, there were no differences among the evaluations as evidenced by an insignificant ANOVA model ($F(5,31)=1.8$, $p>.30$).

The findings from this study imply that a brand’s country of origin can potentially be an asset or liability depending on how consumers interpret a country’s actions. If consumers attribute a country’s negative actions to situational factors, having a salient brand name could be a benefit, assuming consumers originally had positive feelings for the country. However, if consumers attribute a country’s negative actions as being typical of its behavior, then having a salient brand with respect to country of origin could damage the brand image. For brands that are considered relatively weak, the impact of country of origin was found to be minimal in this study. This is likely because consumers do not even consider “weak” brands as viable options for purchase or consumption. Also, the impact of a country’s negative actions seems to have minimal impact on brands with nonsalient countries of origin.

Perhaps the most important implication of this study is that countries have to consider the economic impact of their actions. Negative consumer affect towards a country based on its actions can go beyond negative feelings towards the government and its policies; it can damage the brand image and equity of brands that have become closely associated with the country in consumers’ eyes.

References


Economic Characterization of Low Income Families in the City of Sao Paulo Using Electricity Consumption as a Predictive Variable

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Summary

In 2000, São Paulo’s population numbered approximately 10.5 million inhabitants, or roughly 3 million families (IBGE, 2002), out of which 30% earned below four minimum wages (R$604.00 at the time).

Income has traditionally been adopted as an indicator of life condition and poverty, and it has been used extensively in marketing research. Nonetheless, one problem is that often individuals are reluctant or unwilling to declare income (BUSSAB; FERREIRA, 1999).

The most commonly used indicator used in the country is the Brazil Criterion, proposed in 1996 by the National Association of Market Research Firms–ANEP. This criterion is criticized as not characterizing accurately households in the extremities of the income distribution curve (MATTAR, 1996; SILVA, 2004).

In this study we used an additional variable, energy consumption, with the objective of improving the family income model. The choice of this variable is justified first by the fact that virtually all families, regardless of the remoteness of the household, are served by utility companies. Secondly, collecting electricity consumption is easily done. Third, electricity consumption may reflect the possession of durable goods (GUERREIRO et al., 1996) and is indirectly related to the number of bedrooms and people living in the household (POMPERMAYER; CHARNET, 1996).

Conceptualization

Despite the multiple and sometimes conflicting definitions of income, class and social class in the literature, MATTAR (1995) points out there are some universal characteristics.

The concept of family and household itself is not free of different perspectives; to be sure, IBGE (2004) and Fundação SEADE (2005) have slightly different definitions for family and household: SEADE does not consider domestic employees as members of the household, whereas IBGE does consider them.

The widespread use of income as an indicator for purchasing power in market research is criticized by MATTAR (1994, 1996), who notes that grouping together people with the same income but diverse cultural, educational and aspiration characteristics will result in “averaging out” purchasing behavior, likes and dislikes of radically distinct individuals.

In Brazil, there was no single and objective socioeconomic classification criterion until 1970 (MATTAR, 1996). The usual practice then by firms in the attempt to use segmentation as a basis for marketing strategy was to develop and use their own customer classification. But this meant that firms and advertising agencies could not transport concepts, make market comparisons, or use media to target customer segments across. Finally, the Brazilian Association of Advertisers–ABA introduced in 1970 the first socio-economic criterion in Brazil, which was subject to criticism. A new criterion emerged with the ABA-ABIPME criterion (MATTAR, 1995), which had easier data collection and coding procedures, and better representation of the population in the extremes of the distribution (PEREIRA, 2004; MATTAR, 1995).

Later, ABEP–Brazilian Association of Market Research Firms proposed in 2004 the Brazil Criterion. One of the criticisms of this criterion is its inability to capture life style and social conditions. This criterion uses possession of goods and instruction of the family head, using a 34-point scale that is finally converted into seven economic classes (A1, A2, B1, B2, C, D and E).

Method

The object of this study is the low income population of the city of São Paulo. Low income families are defined as those with income up to four minimum wages, including income from all family members. The choice of four wages is justified by thresholds used in the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2004) to characterize low income families. Therefore, the frame of reference is defined as the set of single family households earning up to four minimum wages, located in nine neighborhoods, living in independent households, and served by electric utility companies.

443 household interviews were made in August 2005, and information regarding electric consumption, age, education, income, household type, employment, and possession of durable goods. Respondents were asked to provide the electric bill, and that information was used to retrieve billing information, resulting in a final sample of 384 households that had usable and accurate information for this study.
The study used linear regression, with household income as the dependent variable, and economic classification as the independent variable together with the electricity consumption variable. The latter was supplied by Eletropaulo, the local utility company. The number of bedrooms and people living in the household were introduced in the regression as control variables.

The study also used decision trees to complement the analysis and help determine interactions among variables (BERRY and LINOFF, 1997).

Major Findings

Of the 384 respondents in the sample in this study, only 253 produced electric bills during the field survey. The bills enabled the collection of electricity consumption from the utility company. The variables collected were consumption of energy, 12-month consumption, electric bill amount in local currency, and 12-month amount. Of the 253 households that produced the bill, the average amount was R$ 59 and the standard deviation was R$ 33.

Income data was collected, with household head income ranging from R$ 458 to R$ 663, and total income averaging R$ 655. Distribution in terms of the Brazil Criterion was 5% class B, 45% class C, 49% class D and 1% class E.

Initially, a regression used Brazil’s Criterion to predict Total Family Income. A polynomial regression showed higher predictive power over exponential, logarithmic and logistic regression models (R²=0.222 ANOVA: F=108.89, P-value=0.000).

The next regression incorporated the electric bill consumption as well as the number of inhabitants and the number of bedrooms in the household, with a resulting R²=0.300. ANOVA with F=54.34 and P-value=0.000. Stepwise regression indicated that the number of inhabitants did not significantly contribute to the explanatory power of income variability.

The final regression is given by the following results, with p-values lower than 0.4% and ANOVA p-value 0%. The Variance Inflation Factor for all variables is under 5, which indicates absence of multicollinearity:

\[
\begin{align*}
a &= \text{Intercept} = 409.27 \\
b_1 &= \text{Brazil’s Criterion} = -7.752 \\
b_2 &= \text{Electric bill amount} = 0.87527 \\
b_3 &= \text{Number of inhabitants} = 83.59
\end{align*}
\]

These results show that the incorporation of the electric consumption and number of bedrooms improved the R² of the model from 0.222 to 0.300.

In conclusion, results indicate that the relationship between income and predictor variables, with analysis of residuals, contribute in the understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

The collection of the electric consumption is done on a regular basis, without data inaccuracies that result from the unwillingness to disclose personal information (FRANCISCO, 2002).

In addition, information collected from utility companies can also be used to calibrate or validate government demographic data. It can also be used in planning distribution, a practice carried out by U.S. utility firms (NOONAN; JOHNSON, 2005).

Lastly, another potential benefit is the availability of reliable data for credit decisions, which in emerging economies can minimize the risk of income informality, and lack of accurate credit behavior information. This can be used by financial institutions and consumer businesses to achieve better segmentation, and increase company profitability.

References:


Automatic Lover²: Linking Consumer Practice to Cultural Texts about the Vibrator
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This working paper presents the early stages of an exploratory interpretive study on an emerging type of Brazilian woman as a more overt consumer of sexual products. By using Hirschman, Scott and Wells’ Model of Product Discourse (1998), we analyze consumption practices in comparison to cultural texts about the vibrator. We intend to further understand, with a sociological approach, how women in Brazil create and negotiate meaning through sexually-related consumption; and to examine, with a marketing approach, the effectiveness of product placement and of stealth branding as strategies to market sex to women. Managerial recommendations are also provided.

Conceptualization
People are having sex. At this very moment, millions of people are either engaging in sexual intercourse or planning to (Mackay 2000). And while they are at it, it is very likely that some sort of consumption might be involved. Be it of preservatives, lubricants, magazines, toys, erectile dysfunction or the Internet, in present day western societies, one can hardly have sex and not be a consumer at the same time. So why does literature on consumption rarely address sexuality?

Although sexuality has been an important topic in the sociology literature for decades, it has to date received relatively little attention in the marketing field. The existing marketing research that, to some extent, relates to sexuality has more frequently focused on topics like homosexuality, gender issues, hedonism, desire, and sex in advertising (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982; Stern 1991; Elliot and Ritsos 1995; Kates 1998, 2002; Reichert and Lambiase 2002), while the actual consumption of sex products and services has been addressed by very few (Gould 1991; Kent 2005; Langer 2007).

The idea for this exploratory study arose during a previous research on the emergence of a more overt female consumer of sexual products (Walther 2007). The ethnographic method was used then, comprising in-depth interviews and participant observation at women-only sex shops in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, which is popularly and scholarly known as a highly sexualized culture (Parker 1991). During the interviews with shop attendants, an episode of North-American TV series “Sex and the City” was repeatedly mentioned as the reason for which the so-called Rabbit vibrator became the best sold item. Therefore, studying the vibrator as a commoditized product seemed like a promising path of investigation.

Thus, the aim of this study is twofold: (1) to further understand, with a sociological approach, how women in Brazil create and negotiate meaning through sexually-related consumption (Gould 1991); and (2) to examine, with a marketing approach, the effectiveness of product placement (Balasubramanian 1994) and of stealth branding (Holt 2002) as strategies to market sex to women.

Method
In this study, we applied Hirschman, Scott and Wells’ Model of Product Discourse (1998) to consumption practices and cultural texts about the vibrator. This model assumes that, in order to acquire meaning, any good must go through a process that will culturally construct it as a symbol and hierarchically place it amidst a product constellation (McCracken 1988) or object system (Baudrillard 1968). Therefore, understanding the process, that is, how goods acquire meaning, is as important as understanding what they mean. This is why data analysis through the Model of Product Discourse may help reaching the aims of this study.

Hirschman, Scott and Wells used data from primetime commercials and programs. They also identified the influence of history on contemporary product meaning. Here we analyzed three Sex and the City episodes—the ones in which a vibrator played a relevant part—comparing them to practices, as described by respondents during our previous study (Walther 2007). Later, we intend to use, as non-fiction texts, articles from a Brazilian women’s magazine that focuses on sexuality.

After comparing text to practice, we arrived at several interpretive questions that equated scenes from Sex and the City with issues regarding Brazilian sexual identity. Then it was time to resort to history, referring to works like Lauqueur’s “Making Sex” (1990) and Brazilian social scientist Gilberto Freyre’s seminal book “Casa-Grande e Senzala” (1933). This step provides a conceptual map for consumption scenes and helps answering questions about how things came to be the way they are.

During all steps of this research, it was important to identify cultural and legal differences between the USA and Brazil, and how they reflect on practices and representations of sexually-related consumption.

²“Automatic Lover” is the title of a 1978 disco song by Dee D. Jackson, in which a woman falls in love with a robot.
Major Findings

Using the Model of Product Discourse to understand social constructions about the vibrator as a commoditized symbol of new female sexualities proved itself as an enriching endeavor. The comparison of cultural texts with practices and history showed that current social conceptions about masturbation, female orgasm and vibrators, despite significant changes, still remount to ancient times.

How did the vibrator become widely perceived as a replacement for men and not as a complement for sex? The vibrator was seen, at the time of its invention and for almost a century, as a device to cure “hysteria” in women. The current difficulty to envisage the simultaneous existence of both man and vibrator in a woman’s life reflects very powerful and long-lasting social patterns, such as the androcentric model of sex, which assumes vaginal penetration by the penis as the source of female orgasms (Maines 1999).

How did men and women come to resist and fear the vibrator? It was a shift in its positioning as a commoditized product that changed the vibrator’s popular perception from a harmless healing device to a menacing addictive automatic lover. Both the realization that female orgasms were more easily produced by a vibrator and its transformation into a commoditized penis contributed largely to male feelings of emasculation and to female fears of addiction.

How did female sensuality become associated with infantile imagery? Historical views of sex as being dangerous to women stand in the way of a sound communication between sex products manufacturers and their female customers. In order to market sex to the female audience, companies have been representing women’s sexual pleasure as fashionable and cute.

These were some of the questions this study tried to address. The investigation of these issues contributes to the understanding of the new female consumer in Brazil and helps generate managerial recommendations. One of them would be to profit from Brazilian soap operas’ enormous reach and influence. Although social issues and cultural trends have been, insofar, successfully disseminated by soap operas in Brazil, sponsored product placement could hugely benefit from meaningful intertwining with the plot (Avery and Ferraro 2000). Following soap opera’s tradition of featuring strong, controversial female characters, it is only a matter of time before we see a vibrator on Brazilian prime time television.

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Attitudes Towards Globalization in an Emerging (Dominican Republic) versus a Developed (U.S.A.) Market
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Yanely Reyes, GoldmanSachs, USA

This paper employs a survey of subjects in the developed economy of the U.S.A. and the emerging economy of the Dominican Republic (representing the largest Caribbean and a major Latin market with a population of 9 million and a GDP per capita, adjusted for purchasing power parity of $8,217) to explore the effects of consumer ethnocentrism, collectivism and level of economic development on an individual’s attitude towards globalization. Further, the study explores the levels of consumer ethnocentrism and collectivism in the Dominican Republic, a country that has received scant attention in the literature.

In this research, we define attitudes towards globalization as a respondent’s degree of favorability toward the phenomenon of worldwide integration resulting from a variety of activities including cross-border transactions across the factors of production. Consumer ethnocentrism—widely measured by the CETSCALE—refers to the attitudes pertaining to the appropriateness and morality of purchasing foreign (or imported) products (Shimp and Sharma 1987). This study explores the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and attitudes towards globalization, as manifested beyond physical products and into the worldwide integration of labor, services, capital, ideas, information and technology. It is thus hypothesized that:

H1a: Individuals with a higher level of consumer ethnocentrism exhibit less favorable attitudes towards globalization.
H1b: Individuals in the Dominican Republic exhibit a higher level of consumer ethnocentrism than those in the U.S.

Individualism-collectivism describes a culture’s relative emphasis on the individual versus the larger collective (Hofstede 2001). Hofstede’s (2001) empirical findings show that the United States is a low-collectivist culture, while Latin-American countries are high-collectivist nations. A higher level of in-group identification drives more negative out-group attitudes (Hewstone et al. 2002). This implies that higher levels of collectivism would have a negative effect on the acceptance and adoption of foreign products, labor, services, capital, ideas, information and technology that result from globalization. It is thus hypothesized that:

H2a: Individuals with a higher level of collectivism exhibit less favorable attitudes towards globalization.
H2b: Individuals in the Dominican Republic exhibit a higher level of collectivism than those in the U.S.

The effect of the level of economic development of a country on attitudes towards globalization is also explored. Econometric evidence suggests a positive relationship between economic development and favorable attitudes towards globalization (Agenor 2004). A reason why globalization may not be favored by individuals in emerging countries is that in the earlier stages of market development they may not be participating in the movement fully enough to allow its economic effects to benefit them (Yusuf 2001). It is thus hypothesized that:

H3: Individuals in an emerging economy exhibit less favorable attitudes towards globalization than those in a developed one.

Data was collected by administering a survey of undergraduate and graduate university students in the United States (n=95, mean age=24.6 years) and the Dominican Republic (n=79, mean age=23.1 years). The survey instrument was first written and formatted in English for use in the U.S.A. and then back-translated into Spanish for use in the Dominican Republic. A total of seven questions (α=0.72) were employed to examine attitudes towards globalization (see Table). Since to the best of our knowledge, the construct has not been previously measured in the consumer behavior literature, we employed a seven-item measure drawing from studies published in the political science (Shulman 2002) and international economics (Hiscox 2006) literatures. The seventeen-item CETSCALE (α=0.95) was employed to measure consumer ethnocentrism (Shimp and Sharma 1987). Finally, the sixteen-item collectivism scale (α=0.85) was adopted from Singelis et al. (1995).

In order to test H1a and H2b, the median split method was employed to divide the entire sample (n=174) into two discreet groups for each of the variables of consumer ethnocentrism and collectivism. In support of H1a, the ANOVA found a significant difference (F=62.145, p=0.0001) when comparing attitudes toward globalization between low-ethnocentrics (n=72) and high-ethnocentrics (n=73). Further, regression analysis found that consumer ethnocentrism was a significant predictor of attitudes toward globalization (B=.531, t=11.04, p<0.0001).

H2a was also supported (F=20.327, p=0.0001), with the findings showing that high-collectivists exhibited less favorable attitudes towards globalization (m=3.80) than low-collectivists (m=3.11). Further, regression analysis found that collectivism was a significant predictor of attitudes toward globalization (B=.391, t=4.02, p<0.0001).

In addition, H3 was supported (F=51.215, p=0.0001), with the findings showing that respondents in the developing country (Dominican Republic) exhibited less favorable attitudes towards globalization (m=4.02) than those in the developed country [U.S.] (m=2.93). In support of H2b, Dominicans (n=78, m=5.68) showed a higher level of collectivism (F=75.356, p=0.0001) than U.S. respondents (n=95, m=4.73). Finally in support of H1b, Dominican respondents manifested a higher level (n=79, m=3.99) of consumer ethnocentrism (F=113.844, p=0.0001) than that observed in the U.S. (n=95, m=2.37).
Overall, the empirical findings provided support for all three hypotheses. These exploratory results represent an initial attempt in the consumer behavior literature to grasp the construct of attitudes towards globalization, comparing an emerging with a developed market. Given that the study involved the comparison of means across countries, further studies should take the issue of measurement invariance into consideration (Steenkamp et al. 1998). Addressing some of the study’s limitations, future research in the consumer behavior domain should develop and psychometrically test a scale of the attitudes towards globalization construct.

Future studies should also examine attitudes towards globalization and its marketing-related antecedents and consequences in more emerging markets at various levels of globalization. Such broader studies will ultimately enable tests for potential mediation effects, allowing for a more clearly delineated set of causal relationships among the constructs of consumer ethnocentrism, collectivism and attitudes toward globalization. Additional moderator variables that could be explored include country level of marketing orientation, awareness and perceived globalness of global products, availability and relative quality of domestic competitors and products. Finally, there is a need to revalidate the CETSCALE, given the changes in the international trade environment in the more than twenty years since the scale’s development.

In an era of increasing globalization the findings provide insight to corporations looking to globalize their marketing activities or outsource. In particular, they suggest that multinational corporations, especially in the globalization domains beyond the exchange of goods, face initial opposition if spreading into early or middle emerging economies, such as that of the Dominican Republic. Finally, more favorable attitudes towards globalization could lead to higher consumer adoption of standardized advertising messages thus further enabling transferable marketing practices.

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### TABLE

Attitudes towards globalization scale

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>Very Strongly Agree</th>
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<td>1) This country should follow its own interests, even if this leads to conflicts with other nations.</td>
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<td>2) Our country should limit import of foreign products in order to protect its national economy.</td>
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<td>3) Foreigners should not be allowed to buy land in this country.</td>
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<td>4) Television should give preference to own country’s films and programs.</td>
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<td>5) Immigrants increase crime rates.</td>
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<td>6) Immigrants take jobs away from people who were born in this country.</td>
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<td>7) I believe that increasing trade with other nations leads to job losses and exposes producers to unfair competition.</td>
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For Better or For Worse: Moderating Effects of Relationship Age and Continuance Commitment on the Service Satisfaction-Word-of-Mouth Relationship

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Abstract

Using survey data of consumers of fixed line telephone services, the moderating effects of the duration of a consumer’s relationship with a service provider (relationship age), and consumer perceptions of continuance commitment, on the consumer satisfaction-positive word of mouth (PWOM) and negative word of mouth (NWOM) relationship is examined. SEM and regression analyses were used to test the theoretically grounded hypotheses. Results show that relationship age was inversely related to both PWOM and NWOM, and moderated the consumer satisfaction-PWOM/NWOM relationship. Continuance commitment had no impact on PWOM, but had a positive direct effect on NWOM, and moderated the consumer satisfaction-NWOM relationship. Theoretical and managerial implications are discussed.

Introduction

Satisfied service consumers are known to generate positive word of mouth (PWOM) and decrease their negative word of mouth (NWOM) about the service experience. But is their proclivity to generate greater PWOM and less NWOM impacted by other factors such as the length of time they have consumed that service? Does relationship age impact the satisfaction–PWOM/NWOM relationship? As Verhoef et al (2002) point out, despite the theoretical and managerial significance of the effects of relationship age, only a very small number of empirical studies have investigated either its direct or its moderating effects, and the results of these studies have often been equivocal.

Service firms devote significant resources to retain consumers for the long-run, and sometimes do that by creating high switching costs. Such switching costs increase consumer perceptions of continuance commitment, i.e., consumers’ continued patronage may be more due to their perceptions of high switching costs and their desire to avoid those costs. While such a form of continuance commitment might lead to consumer retention, how does this impact other important downstream variables such as PWOM/NWOM? Will such a form of commitment impact the established satisfaction–PWOM/NWOM relationship?

Drawing on an understanding of consumer motivations to generate PWOM and NWOM, this paper develops hypotheses and reports the results of a survey conducted to test these hypotheses.

Research hypotheses

Main effects of relationship age and continuance commitment on PWOM/NWOM:

In the initial stages of a consumer’s interaction with a service provider, consumers are required to be involved in information search about the service as they decide on and evaluate their purchase decision. Such an involvement diminishes with time. Moreover, it is at these early stages that cognitive dissonance tends to be high (Oliver, 1997), and PWOM/NWOM is used to cope with such dissonance. Therefore, relationship age will have a negative effect on PWOM/NWOM such that PWOM/NWOM will decrease as relationship age increases.

Continuance commitment may lead to the undesirable state of the consumer feeling dependent and entrapped and may have adverse consequences on NWOM (Wangenheim, 2003). Allan & Gilbert (2002) found that when individuals felt trapped in a relationship, they experienced greater anger and expressed this anger. Such an expression of anger in the context of service consumption could imply NWOM which includes complaining and bad-mouthing to other consumers as well as to the provider.

But this perception of continuance commitment is unlikely to impact PWOM, which is sensitive to the positive aspects of the consumption experience. Therefore, continuance commitment will have a positive effect on NWOM such that as continuance commitment increases, NWOM will increase. Continuance commitment will have no effect on PWOM.
Moderating effect of relationship age on the consumer satisfaction-PWOM/NWOM relationship:

Newer consumers are likely to be more sensitive to their levels of consumer satisfaction as they are still in the process of evaluating their purchase. Long-term consumers will be more immune to variations in consumer satisfaction. Thus, as consumer satisfaction increases, newer consumers will be able to use this satisfying experience to reassure themselves of their purchase decision as well as use it effectively for self-presentational purposes, leading newer consumers to have greater PWOM when compared to long-term consumers. As consumer satisfaction decreases, newer consumers who are still in the process of monitoring their purchase will have greater motivation to generate NWOM in an attempt to rectify the situation or to vent their frustrations. Therefore, relationship age will moderate the consumer satisfaction-PWOM relationship such that as consumer satisfaction increases (decreases), PWOM/NWOM will be higher for newer consumers than for long-term consumers.

Moderating effects of continuance commitment on the consumer satisfaction-WOM relationship:

While consumers with high levels of continuance commitment may feel entrapped, these issues of entrapment may not be relevant if they are experiencing high levels of consumer satisfaction. For instance, Jones et al. (2000) found that as customer satisfaction increased, the presence of switching costs did not affect repurchase intentions when customer satisfaction was high. Consequently, continuance commitment will not moderate the consumer satisfaction-PWOM relationship. But, turning to NWOM, as consumer satisfaction falls, consumers typically want to quit and seek other alternatives (Keaveney 1995). Any presence of switching costs will then be perceived to be a barrier to their desire to switch. The consumers may start to feel like ‘hostages’ (Jones and Sasser, 1995), and may vent their frustrations through greater NWOM. Therefore, continuance commitment will not moderate the relationship between consumer satisfaction and PWOM but will moderate the relationship between consumer satisfaction and NWOM such that as consumer satisfaction decreases, higher levels of continuance commitment will lead to greater NWOM.

Methodology

In collaboration with the largest telecommunication service provider in the U.K., 1900 fixed line telephone consumers were selected randomly for a mail survey. Overall, the sample was found to be representative of the general population characteristics.

Relationship age was measured in years and the reliability of this self-reported score was confirmed using company databases. Multi-item scales adapted from past research captured satisfaction, continuance commitment, and PWOM/NWOM. Exploratory factor analysis was followed by confirmatory factor analysis to test for convergent validity and internal consistency. Confirmatory factor analysis was performed on the reflective type scales using LISREL8 with Maximum Likelihood estimation (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1993). Fit indices were found to meet recommended guidelines. As suggested by Bollen (1989), factor loadings and the squared multiple correlations between the items and the constructs were examined to further assess the validity of the measures. These figures, as well as internal consistency tests met recommended criteria.

Regression analyses were run to estimate the models of PWOM and NWOM. In doing so, we followed the procedure recommended by Irwin & McClellan (2001) to avoid the common heuristics of moderated multiple regression models. As per recommended practice, further graphical and statistical analysis was done to supplement regression results.

Results

Newer consumers generated greater PWOM and NWOM than long-term consumers. Relationship age moderated the satisfaction-PWOM/NWOM relation. As satisfaction increases, newer consumers generate greater PWOM than long-term consumers. Low levels of satisfaction lead to greater NWOM, for newer consumers more than for long-term consumers.

There were no direct or moderating effects of continuance commitment on PWOM. However, continuance commitment had a positive direct effect on NWOM and moderated the positive relationship between satisfaction and NWOM such that as satisfaction falls, continuance commitment led to greater NWOM. Theoretical and managerial implications are discussed.

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Mortality Salience and Extrinsic Goal Orientation: The Moderating Effects of Self-Esteem and Materialistic Values

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Conceptual Background

Consumption is central to the meaningful practice of everyday life. Products that we buy, activities that we perform and beliefs that we hold tell stories about who we are. Certainly we do not consume products only to satisfy our needs, but also to enhance our self-esteem through products. Terror Management Theory (TMT) addresses the question of “why people need self-esteem.” It suggests that one reason people need self-esteem is to provide a shield against a deeply rooted fear of death inherent in the human condition. The theory implies that the death-related anxiety is mitigated when self-esteem is strong but this anxiety instigates various forms of defensive behavior aimed at bolstering self-worth through compensatory efforts when self-esteem is weak or challenged. If self-esteem functions to buffer anxiety, then mortality salience should increase efforts to procure self-esteem. Greenberg et al. (1992) provided the first evidence suggesting that mortality salience increases self-esteem striving by demonstrating that mortality salience led liberals, who are committed to the value of tolerance, to respond more favorably to someone who challenged their worldviews.

In consumer context, studies have implied that mortality salience increases extrinsic goal orientations such as the preference for high-status products (Mandel and Heine 1999) and desire for materialistic possessions (Arndt et al. 2004) as a way of bolstering a self-esteem. Extrinsic goal orientations are characterized as obtaining external approval and rewards: financial success (money), social recognition (fame), and an appealing appearance (image) (Kasser and Ryan 1996). TMT also suggests that mortality salience motivates people to behave in accord with their internalized values. A value is defined as an enduring belief (Rokeach 1973). Materialism is widely viewed as a set of important life values that guide people’s choices and conduct in a variety of situations, including consumption (Richins and Dawson 1992).

We were interested in testing directly whether mortality salience affects the importance placed on extrinsic goals. In addition, we wanted to directly test whether this relation is driven by self-esteem striving and whether it is stronger for those who place high value on materialistic possessions. If these propositions are true, then the positive relations between mortality salience and the importance of extrinsic goals should be greater for those with low self-esteem than those with high self-esteem and greater for those high in materialistic values than those low in materialistic values.

Method

Sixty-eight college students filled out a questionnaire run in a computer-based laboratory setting in exchange for partial course credit. They were told that the purpose of the study was to assess students’ attitudes and a variety of personality traits. All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale. Participants were randomly assigned to either mortality salience conditions or control conditions. Participants were given 90 seconds to think about either their own death or physical pain (control) and to write down their thoughts. Participants in mortality salience conditions were asked to respond to two open-ended questions: “Please briefly describe the emotions that the thought of your own death arouses in you” and “Please jot down as specifically as you can what you think will happen to you as you physically die and once you are physically dead.” Correspondingly, those in control conditions were asked to respond to two open-ended questions: “Please briefly describe the emotions that the thought of intense physical pain arouses in you” and “Please jot down as specifically as you can what you think will happen to you as you physically experience intense pain and once you have physically experienced intense pain.” Immediately after the manipulation, participants completed the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) (Watson, Clark, and Tellegen 1988). The purpose of the PANAS scale was to assess possible affective consequences of the manipulations and to serve as a delay and distraction so that mortality salience effects were driven by non-conscious accessibility of death-related thoughts. After completing the PANAS scale, participants were asked to complete a word-search puzzle, which was adapted from Hart, Shaver, and Goldenberg (2005), to manipulate self-esteem. In the self-esteem boost condition, it was easy for participants to find words but in the self-esteem threat condition, it was impossible for them to find any words in the puzzle. In both conditions, participants were told that “the average student finds 4 words in 2 minutes.” Immediately after the word-search puzzle, participants completed the Rosenberg (1965) self-esteem scale as a manipulation check. Also, to measure preexisting materialistic values, we used Richins and Dawson (1992)’s scale of materialism values, which consists of success, centrality, and happiness. For dependent measure, we used an extrinsic goal aspiration scale (Kasser and Ryan 1996), which consists of financial success, attractive appearance, and social recognition.

Results

First, we hypothesized that the effects of mortality salience would be greater for individuals with low self-esteem than those with high self-esteem. Contrary to our hypothesis, the difference between threat and boost self-esteem was significant only in a physical pain condition not in a mortality salience condition, such that a threat (a boost) to self-esteem increased (decreased) financial success goal orientations in a physical pain condition. There was no significant difference in a mortality salience condition.

Second, we hypothesized that the effects of mortality salience would be greater for individuals with high materialistic values than those with low materialistic values. The analysis revealed no evidence that materialistic values moderated the effects of mortality salience on extrinsic goal orientations.

Self-esteem manipulations did not appear to work. The reason might be that we collected data at the end of semester so that students may not have been motivated or did not pay attention. Therefore, we plan to collect new data for further investigation.
References


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The Street Open Market Fairs (Ferias Libres) in Chile: Their Acts and Experiences

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Overview and Introduction

At present, we can say that Latin America is a quite complex articulation of tradition and modernity, a continent where diverse races, traditions and religious beliefs coexist; therefore it is no wonder that an interweaving of these races, traditions and beliefs takes place, giving origin to new logics of development and culture.

The growth of its population in history is another relevant fact that contributes to its heterogeneity and rural migration to urban areas (mainly to capital cities) contributes to the fact that today nearly 70% of the population resides in urban areas and only a 30% remain in rural areas.3

In this process, popular traditions, rather than becoming extinguished, have reconverted to adapt to the city. In the case of open market fairs, these begin to attract urban consumers who find in the “folkloric” goods signs of identity that the massive industrial goods do not offer.

With the entrance of retail in Chile, some predicted the end of open market fairs, but over the years this modernist tendency did not smash these sale channels, and moreover, they experienced a growth.4 The cause being that these fairs update to the needs of their clients without leaving aside their identity.

Do we really know our consumer? A question raised by those who work in massive channels, without considering that the Latin American consumer and particularly the Chilean is “dual”, conjugating tradition and modernity in its practices of consumption, something that the open market fairs thoroughly understand.

The oversupply of the industry has forced innovation in the way products and services are offered, which has not only allowed greater efforts in the pure variables of marketing, but also to actively involve its consumers in commercial strategies based on their experiences.

The approach of this investigation begins with the interaction of elements of modernity and tradition that takes place in the purchasing experiences in the open market fairs and determining the attributes or symbolic appreciations, which add value in this channel of supply compared to that of retail.

Objective of the Session

- Explore in the purchasing relation of between the consumers and fair vendors (feriantes) through the value of experience.
- Identify which are the affectionate values and experiences of the consumers with the open market fairs.
- Identify the main factors and attributes in the fair vendor/client relation.

Through the purchasing experiences in the close relationship between fair vendors and clients, the main factors that generate this bond were observed by means of an ethnographic investigation approach: making use of participant and non-participant observation techniques in Santiago fairs. Focus groups were then carried out with fair vendors at their usual gathering place to obtain a general context; and finally, in depth interviews were realized ‘in situ’ to fair vendors in their “expert” role, and also to frequent consumers.

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4According to the study LatinPanel 2007, in the first quarter of 2007, the open market fairs grew a 28%. This is equivalent to 100 thousand more homes, mainly from the middle class segment. In the Chilean Metropolitan Region it reached 10 points in the sales channel mix.
From the point of view of the “experience economy”, according to Pine & Gilmore, the fairs represent particular experiences in each of the consumers who participate in them, which slightly vary according to cultural, social and emotional factors. They are remembered in different ways, because visiting a fair is not a mere transaction, behind it lies a purchase experience where the exacerbated attributes of the product are placed in the scene to take the senses to an extreme, which finally results in a great difference to the consumers.

In spite of the advance of retail in Chile and modernization of the purchasing processes, fairs have managed to remain in time through their associated value and meaning assigned by their clients. According to Bordieu, the capital owned by a person (that creates the distinctions between social classes) is vital, because the acquisition of goods in a determined place as a result of accumulative cultural, social and economic aspects from the community and family will directly influence the value assigned to one type of purchasing experience against others. At the fairs, these are not exclusive of a certain social class, it is part of the “habitus” of a great set of people with homogenous values and meanings and that appreciate the “experience” above other factors such as price or infrastructure.

We are immersed in a world of oversupply, where being different becomes more and more complex and making decisions is a confusing task, since consumption is basically an emotional and not a rational act as it was previously believed. Derived from this, to a large extent what is valued the most in purchases in the open market fairs are the affectionate and emotional aspects of the purchasing experience and what this generates in the consumer:

- To evoke memories,
- To socialize, integration in the community,
- Sense of cultural identity and belonging,
- Preferential treatment (that does not occur in massive channels like the retail),
- A space to break the routine, even as a weekend family activity.

Conclusions
Given the increasing urbanization of the city and the loss of a neighborhood sense, the fair plays an integrative role, since it constitutes a space dedicated to social encounter and relations in an everyday more hermetic and individualistic society.

One of the main characteristics of the fairs in Chile is tradition, in a country that has seen tradition reconverted by the results of development. This channel is considered a “small scale sized Chile”, crossing all social layers, a part of the national identity that has persisted in time without leaving aside the elements of modern times such as: electronic debit card payment systems, electronic weighing devices, mobile automatic tellers and home delivery. Changes that reveal a great capacity to adapt their services, since they are altogether in control of the value chain in their product stands and therefore know its environment, weaknesses and threats.

Many research studies have focused in the consumer and its performance in retail, but have not accounted on the importance of the traditional channel and the great amount of information it provides. Through this, a relevant topic is raised to understand the latent consumption opportunities existing in this scenario and that generate a value offer for the different distribution channels, massive and traditional as well.

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Local Management of Global Advertising Campaigns: Identifying Different Attitude Profiles among Brazilian Professionals
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This paper seeks to exploit the opinions, beliefs and attitudes of professionals engaging in the decisions to execute, manage and produce advertising campaigns as regards the issue of globalization versus localization of the strategies of international advertisers. Communications and marketing professionals currently face a major conflict: how can one efficiently balance the potential of global strategy programs to increase the consistent perception of brands and products worldwide, optimize costs and provide greater control over contents and formats, while respecting inherent cultural differentiation, traditions and history?

In order to understand the aspects involved in this issue, a bibliographic review was done to provide the cornerstone for a piece of exploratory research conducted with 197 respondents, marketing communications professionals who work at clients and Brazilian advertising agencies, with a view to detecting significant differences between these two groups. The results show no significant differences between them. This result allowed formulates a new hypothesis of the existence of clusters among respondents, regardless to be professional of advertising agency or advertiser. Using statistical cluster analysis it was possible to identify three clusters between both

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5Pierre Bordieu: “La Distinción: criterios y bases sociales del gusto”. 1999

6“Habitus”: Agrupación y estructura de capitales culturales, sociales y económicos (P. Bordieu, “La Distinción; criterios y bases sociales del gusto”. 1999)
types of respondents: local defenders, global enthusiasts and “glocal” pragmatics. Their expressed opinions point to higher and lower levels of acceptance of global communications policies on the part of advertisers.

The cluster 1—Local Defenders (22% of the sample, being 25% made up of Client Professionals and 75% made up of Agency Professionals)—a group formed by supporters of local cultural aspects and the belief that use of global campaigns is often inadequate, which has been determined by their strong disagreement with phrases that point to the advantages of using global campaigns and having international agencies manage communications efforts. Their acknowledgment of advertising as the main marketing communications mix tool is noticeable, as well as their rejection of the idea that the evolution of the marketing environment towards a homogeneization of cultures is an irreversible trend. Therefore, this group of professionals can be viewed as people who have a profoundly critical outlook of market evolution tending towards a globalized scenario that doesn’t value local professional practices and fails to acknowledge the peculiarities and differences of each culture.

Cluster 2—Global Enthusiasts (22% of the sample, being 61% made up of Client Professionals; 39% made up of Agency Professionals)—by analyzing differentiated patterns of answers given to the statements proposed, it is possible to describe this group of respondents as one which shows enthusiasm for and acceptance of themes relating to global marketing activity and communications, in addition to a higher positive assessment of the idea that culture homogeneization is an irreversible trend in the future. On the other hand, this group has the largest number of those who disagree with the statements toward the need to adapt campaigns, the efficiency of local campaigns, and the inadequacy of standards to create campaigns.

Cluster 3—Glocal Pragmatics (56% of the sample, being 67% of client professionals; 33% of agency professionals)—this is the largest group of professionals, with a mixed pattern of beliefs and attitudes vis-à-vis the other groups. Their acknowledgement of the global marketing scenario as an imperative, coupled with lower resistance to international management of communications programs, contrasts with an outlook in which there is room for local agencies serving international marketing practitioners and for professionals in local positions to take part in this process. In summary, most respondents accept the global communications imperative, but also value strategies to adapt and understand local conditions in the practice of marketing communications by advertisers.

To complete the depiction of each cluster a new process was conducted with the purpose of identifying demographic differences between groups, using Chi-square type tests to assess the significance of differences in qualitative variables, and F-type tests (ANOVA) to assess quantitative variables. The analysis of correspondence regarding the main categories of demographic variables in the respondent clusters showed that Cluster 1 (Local Defenders) is typically formed by respondents in the upper bracket income (making between US$ 4,000 and US$ 6,000 a month), with a higher number of respondents in the agency segment, mostly in their 40s to 50s, a larger number of which reporting incomplete education. The Globalization Enthusiasts in Cluster 2, in turn, consist mostly of higher income bracket respondents, who make over US$ 6,000 a month, and are also made up of a higher number of females. Most of the professionals in this group are older than 50, and have worked abroad longer than those in the other groups. The Glocal Pragmatics in Cluster 3 have typically attended more graduation courses and are situated in two career seniority ranges: they are either those with less experience (careers of up to 7.5 years) or with longer careers (between 15 and 22.5 years).

The results obtained suggest embarking on new research to broaden the discussion and advance the theme understanding. The first one is typically comparative: would this be typical of Brazilian professionals, or do such beliefs and attitudes exist in other markets? Can the attitude of either suspicion or adherence of professionals who set up global communications strategies influence the campaign’s end result? Does the clear support of local approaches by agency professionals follow a strategic vision of the activity, or is it an instinctive reaction to the loss of business and functional importance in the creative process and campaign production? Aligned with global campaign efficiency studies and the use of promotional tools, research work such as this will certainly help advance the understanding of borderline issues in modern marketing communications practice.

References


**Neuroimaging Techniques–Promising Research Method also for Practical Marketing Research?**

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Very recently, marketing research has recognized the potential of the so called “neuromarketing-approach” (see for an overview Lee, Broderick and Chamberlain 2006, Lee and Broderick 2007; Kenning, Plaasmann and Ahlert 2007a; Kenning, Plaasmann and Ahlert 2007b; Aholt, Neuhaus, Teichert, Weber and Elger 2007). Neuroscientific techniques, such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), magnetoencephalography (MEG), and electroencephalography (EEG) have become dominant research tools within contemporary psychophysiology (see e.g. Cooke, Peel, Shaw and Senior 2007). The advantages of applying such techniques also within consumer behavior research are obvious. Psychophysiological information complements traditional methods of investigating human behavior and especially human decision-making. The so called “black-box” of the consumer is no longer an “unreachable sphere.” Neuroimaging techniques can contribute to fundamental research in terms of a better conceptual understanding of latent constructs in consumer behavior. They explore physiological correlates and thereby contribute to content and construct validity of traditional measures in the social sciences in general and in marketing research in particular. This knowledge will contribute to overcoming the obstacles traditional quantitative marketing research had to deal with and will help to establish sound and valid measures to capture e.g. cognitions, emotions or attitudes. However, we assume that these approaches cannot fully replace conventional questionnaire-based measurement. In practice, only the latter can provide quantifications of latent variables on a large scale in “real world”-situations (Brenner, Koller and Salzberger 2008).

Nevertheless, to gain a more comprehensive conceptual understanding of the relevant phenomena in order to be able to develop sound measures (e.g. applying advanced item response theory), investigations using neuroimaging techniques are inevitable.

From a scientific point of view, there is an obvious need for more studies in this respect. From a practitioner’s point of view, this is not necessarily the case. As far as our knowledge from initial literature review, there is no accurate data on industry’s opinion about these new techniques to gain fundamental knowledge which contributes to their practical market research activities. There are two major reasons why there are still only few experimental studies applying e.g. fMRI in marketing research: a) funding and b) need for cooperation with medical and brain research teams. Cooperative projects involving industry would help financing such complex and expensive experimental studies and would provide new insight for marketing research and practice alike.

Within our present working project we want to address these obstacles that constrain empirical endeavors applying neuroimaging techniques by taking a closer look at possible stakeholders. As a first stage of research, we are going to conduct exploratory qualitative interviews with marketing professionals and medical research institutions providing the technical equipment. Data collection is planned to take place during March and April 2008. Expert interviews with marketing professionals will cover the following topics: general knowledge and opinion about new techniques available, willingness to support and pay for a cooperative project, perceived strenghts and
weaknesses of present market research techniques applied, topical areas where neuro-knowledge would be appreciated by the companies, etc. Interviews with medical research institutions will be basically about gaining an overall picture on the requirements to support applied research projects outside health research issues. Neuroimaging techniques such as e.g. fMRI can contribute to fundamental research in terms of a better conceptual understanding of the latent constructs which is necessary to develop sound questionnaires. Following Page (2008), survey-based and qualitative research will always be necessary to fully interpret the findings gained by neuroscientific methods. It is important to address the question, how knowledge about the potential of these alternative approaches in combination with the existing set of qualitative and quantitative research methods, can be diffused from academia to the practical world.

As a second stage of research, another group of stakeholders, namely potential participants in neuroimaging projects, will be addressed. Cooke, Peel, Shaw and Senior (2007) came up with interesting results regarding the perspective of people who took part in an fMRI or MEG experiment (Cooke, Peel, Shaw and Senior 2007; Senior, Smyth, Cooke, Shaw and Peel 2007). Based on their findings, we will ask a broader population about their willingness to take part in a study applying physiological techniques. The average customer as potential participant in such a study is usually quite unfamiliar with these alternative market research techniques. We want to gain information under which conditions people would be willing to participate, whether there is a need for providing (financial) incentives or whether they have any, e.g. health-related, concerns. Getting information on participants’ needs and requirements will help designing future projects and evading any interferences due to non-compliance of the participants during data collection. This will be done by conducting a quantitative acceptance survey. We aim at finding out whether there are special groups of people especially interested in such methods based on demographic, lifestyle and personality trait variables. Furthermore, we want to compare the future relevance of neuroimaging techniques, in particular fMRI, with other possible physiological approaches such as analysing facial-expression to derive e.g. information on emotions. We assume that the latter will be more promising for practical marketing research, especially when it comes up to gather information from children, intercultural settings and within the area of advertising research.

References

Brazilian Research in Consumer Behavior Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior: A Brief Analytic Review
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TPB (Ajzen 1985) is one of the three most important action theories (Bagozzi, Gürhan-Canli, and Priester 2002). It aims to explain behavioral intentions based on a few constructs: belief, attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen 1985). Despite the empirical support for TPB (see, for example, meta-analyses reviewed by Sutton 1998; Armitage and Conner 2001), many authors have suggested refinements in order to increase its explanatory power. For example, the percentage of variance in intention can be increased by the addition of moral norms (Conner and McMillan 1999; Parker et al. 1996), and the inclusion of measures of self-efficacy and anticipated regret (O’Connor e Armitage 2003).

Based on meta-analyses, Rivis and Sheeran (2003) advocate the representation of social norms in behavioral intention models by distinguishing injunctive norms and descriptive norms. Bagozzi and Warshaw (1990) recommended a better specification for attitude dimensions and that the residual effect of past behavior was included in the TPB’s basic constructs net, giving rise to a different model—the Theory of Trying—to research behaviors that can be interpreted as goals.
Although Ajzen (2002a) encourages improvements of TPB, he bases on literature review to argue that the effect of past behavior is attenuated when measures of intention and behavior are compatible and disappears when intentions are strong and well defined, the expectations are realistic and specific plans to implement action are devised. Controversies about the theoretical development of TPB like these should be enlightened through further studies.

In Brazil, the investigation of the validity of TPB is scant. This working paper is based on eight publications, including 17 studies, which investigated TPB. The works were chosen through searching digital databases of master theses and doctoral dissertations defended in Brazilian universities. Main Brazilian academic journals and conference proceedings were also surveyed. Basic sources were taken into consideration in order to avoid analyzing similar papers about the same studies. The year-period of the literature search was from 1985 on since the first paper about TPB was published in 1985. Papers about secondary aspects of TPB were discarded, for example, studies that investigated only one of its theoretical constructs.

Based on these publications, the explained variance in behavioral intention ranged from .165 to .90. Both the inferior and superior limit are quite apart from average values in international studies. According meta-analyses, attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control explain from 39 to 42% of variance in intentions (Armitage and Conner 2001; Godin and Kok 1996; Sheeran and Taylor 1999).

According to a summary of research results, as the percentage of explained variance in intention increases also does the coefficients of the main predictor, supporting the rule quoted by Ajzen (2002b), which establishes that the more favorable the attitude, subjective norm, and perceived control the stronger should be the person’s intention to perform the behavior in question.

On the other side, there is a negative relationship between betas of attitude and behavioral control, that is, the highest the beta of attitude the lowest is the beta of behavioral control. In accordance with such result, Ajzen (1991) notes that the relative importance of attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control in the prediction of intention varies according to behaviors and situations. For example, when attitudes are strong and normative influences are powerful, perceived behavioral control might be less important to predict intentions.

Attitude was the most important predictor of intention in 13 out of the 17 studies analyzed. Although subjective norm is reputed as the weakest predictor of intention (Sheeran, Norman, and Orbell 1999), SN was the most important predecessor of intention in Rodrigues’ (2007) study. The distinction of injunctive and descriptive norms, following recommendation by Armitage and Conner (2001), might help to explain this construct prominence to explain variance in intention to engage in adventure tourism. Other explanations suggest either the influence of Brazilian cultural traits or the type of target behavior.

Three of the analyzed works showed that perceived control was the best predictor of intention. For example, Monteiro and Veiga (2006) reported that perceived behavioral control was more important than the other attitudinal constructs in accounting for variance in intention of quitting smoking (perceived control had a standardized beta of .63 whereas attitude’s beta was .22 and subjective norm’s beta was .36).

Despite the ultimate objective of TPB being to predict overt behavior, out of the 17 studies analyzed only two works also aimed to measure the target behavior after measuring intention and attitudinal constructs—the study by Goecking (2006) about dieting and working out, and the research carried out by Lacerda (2007) concerning renting films through the Internet.

Considering all studies, there was a wide dispersion of accounted for variance in intention ranging from .165 to .90 that can be explained by the diversity of focused behaviors and methodological rigor.

Five out of the seventeen studies analyzed aimed either to investigate either other action theories or to try the addition of antecedents of behavioral intention to improve explanatory power. For example, the study by Goecking (2006) assessed TPB and also compared it to the Model of Goal-Directed Behavior—MGB (Perugini and Bagozzi 2001), which can be considered a combination of anticipated emotions with desires and frequency and recency effects of past behavior, along with the variables of TPB. Results showed that a substantial increase of variance accounted for in volition construct (adopted as equivalent to intention) was gotten in MGB in comparison to TPB (R²=.87 vs. R²=.54), but paradoxically explanation of overt behavior, based on self-report, diminished from R²=.25 to R²=.23.

Although with a wide dispersion, the explanatory power of TPB was supported in Brazilian studies. Only a paper (Veiga and Monteiro 2005) included the assessment of the model of expectancy-value in the combination of beliefs to produce attitudinal constructs. The other works were limited to the examination of the theory based on the relationships among its higher level constructs. More recent research projects (Gonçalves et al. 2006 and Rodrigues 2007) have approached a cross-cultural evaluation of TPB, comparing Brazilian respondents to the ones of Argentina and USA.

References
Factors that Influence the Brand Loyalty and Dealer Loyalty of the Automotive Industry: The Case of Mexican Consumers in the Central Region of Mexico

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Abstract
In this study we investigate which factors determine the automobile brand and dealer loyalty of Mexican consumers, and to what extent. We collected data on brand loyalty and dealer loyalty among customers who bought their vehicle two years or more ago to permit evaluation of loyalty behavior. Our findings show that the core factor that appears to determine the loyalty of the Mexican consumer in the automotive industry is the satisfaction with the technical-functional quality of the automobile. Within this factor, satisfaction with the vehicle’s safety (in event of an accident), the vehicle’s maneuverability and vehicle comfort are the highest-ranked variables. In second place appears the satisfaction with the global cost of the vehicle and with the dealer after sales service. This study further reveals that it does not exist an authentic/real brand or dealer loyalty among Mexican car purchasers. This means that in spite of a customer’s current preference for the brand studied, the customer has tried and has bought different brands in the past, or simply has been sensitive to the competitors’ marketing actions or strategies.

Antecedents and Main Purpose
The Mexican automotive industry faces increasing competition because many brands and sub-brands are available on the marketplace. It is also affected by vehicles that are manufactured abroad. Sales of vehicles manufactured abroad have increased from 11.5% in 1994 to 63% of the total Mexican car market in 2005 (Secretaría de Economía, Mexico). This situation has exacerbated the competition among automotive manufacturers and their dealership systems at Mexico (Figure 1). In this competitive environment, how to reach the consumer loyalty has become the most important issue to preserve the market share of each of the brands. Because the automotive Mexican customer loyalty behavior is understudied, and because it is difficult to transfer other models and scales to the Mexican context (Arroyo, Carrete & García, 2008), the main purpose of this study is to explore which factors determine the automobile brand and dealer loyalty of Mexican consumers, and to what extent.

Theoretical Framework
To answer the question of what induces consumers to exhibit loyal behavior to a certain product or brand, literature recurrently emphasizes consumer satisfaction with the product or service (Fornell et al. 1996; Kristensen et al. 2001). In the automotive sector, product
quality, in its broadest sense, is the central determining factor of customer satisfaction with the car (Johnson, 1997). And the consumer satisfaction with the car explains brand loyalty (Bloemer and Lemmink, 1992). The core criteria considered for evaluating the technical-functional quality of an automobile are: practicality, driving comfort, performance, workmanship and number of times the vehicle needs to be repaired. (Oliver 1997; Westbrook & Oliver 1981). The dealer, on the other hand, also plays a decisive role in the evaluation of customers’ overall satisfaction (Roscino and Pollice, 2004). The automotive dealer constitutes the most important point of contact between clients and manufacturers in the pre-purchase, purchase and after sales/post-purchase phases. Therefore, the service that the dealer provides can influence customers’ level of satisfaction in all three phases. Martilla & James (1977) emphasize technical quality and free repairs as crucial for customer satisfaction with dealers. Satisfactory resolution of customer complaints also appears as a determiner of loyalty (Fornell et al. 1996). To explain the concept of brand loyalty, different definitions have been used in earlier studies. However, in this investigation, we will approach brand loyalty construct using Oliver’s four-stage model (Oliver, 1999). These four stages are: cognitive loyalty (positively evaluating the performance of the brand); affective loyalty (feelings about the brand); conative loyalty (intention to repurchase the brand) and action loyalty (the actual repurchase of the brand).

Methodology
First, the unit of study was defined. A corporate automotive brand was chosen which is a sales leader in the Mexican automotive industry. Post-purchase service managers of this brand supported the research project. Executives from the manufacturer proposed five dealer units in which to perform the study. These automotive dealers are located in the Central Region of Mexico. Second was the design of a depth interview guide. The concept of loyalty is complex; it is not only related to repurchase behavior, but also linked to perceptions and feelings that are not always conscious to the consumer. Therefore, an open instrument format was appropriate to gather information. Each of the dimensions of loyalty reported by the literature was considered (satisfaction with the quality vehicle, global vehicle cost, dealer sales process, dealer after sales service and the complaint resolution). Third was the sample size definition. The sample consisted of 100 customers from the 5 selected dealers. The interviews were conducted with customers who bought their vehicle two years or more ago to permit evaluation of loyalty behavior.

The interviews were carried out on October 2007 and January 2008 by eight professors and two MBA students of ITESM–Campus Toluca. Each interview was recorded and transcripted. Then, they were analyzed by the Content Analysis methodology.

Findings
The demographic profile of these 100 customers is necessary in order to contextualize the findings. These 100 opinions are mainly of men between 31-50 years of age, who are professionals, whose average incomes rank between $11,600 up to $85,000 Mexican pesos per month, (Mexican middle and upper-middle class).

The core factor that appears to determine the loyalty of the Mexican consumer in the automotive industry is the satisfaction with the technical-functional quality of the automobile. Within this factor, satisfaction with the vehicle’s safety (in event of an accident), the vehicle’s maneuverability and vehicle comfort are the highest-ranked variables. In second place appears the satisfaction with the global cost of the vehicle (associated with price, fuel costs, repair costs and replacement part costs) and with the dealer after sales service (reception, delivery and vehicle service realized). Even though these aspects are less important than the vehicle’s technical-functional quality, these are important enough to influence the consumer’s intention to try other brands that, in their opinion, will give them more benefits at the same price, or such benefits at a lesser price.

This study further reveals that it does not exist an authentic/real brand or dealer loyalty among Mexican car purchasers. This means that in spite of a customer’s current preference for the brand studied, the customer has tried and has bought different brands in the past.
or simply has been sensitive to the competitors’ marketing actions or strategies. Of Oliver’s four stages, the one that appears strongest is the conative loyalty related to the intention to recommend the brand and the dealer to someone they know. In second place is affective loyalty, because of the positive feelings showed by the interviewed people. In third is the conative loyalty related to the intention to purchase the same brand again, and the customers’ desire to buy their next car with the same dealer. The cognitive loyalty was in fourth place (the positive evaluation of the brand and the dealer), and finally, action loyalty appeared, given the customers’ actual purchasing habits both with vehicles and where they choose to get parts and service done.

The findings of this qualitative research will be the basis of a quantitative research in order to (des)confirm these findings. Future research will focus also on the dealer’s and manufacturers criteria of potential loyalty in order to address some major issues of the consumer-dealer relationship.

References