The Road Traveled, the Road Ahead, Or Simply on the Road? When Progress Framing Affects Motivation in Goal Pursuit

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The present research examined how the framing of one’s progress from an initial state toward an end state (i.e., framed as the distance traveled from the initial state to the present state – ‘work-done’ vs. framed as the distance left from the present state to the end state – ‘work-left’) and construal level interact in influencing motivation in goal pursuit. In two experiments we found that both state and chronic differences in experienced construal level modulate the impact of progress framing on motivation, such that type of framing only affected motivation of people with an abstract, but not a concrete mindset. Under these conditions, progress framed in terms of work-done produced increased motivation compared to a work-left frame. Moreover, perceived goal distance was found to mediate the impact of progress framing on motivation for individuals with an abstract, but not a concrete mindset.

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2010). Based on the above categorization, Mukhopadhyay and Johar (2005) identify two theoretically orthogonal dimensions: the quantum (limited or unlimited amount of ability) and the changeability (fixed or malleable over time). Subsequently, they further draw distinction on four types of lay theories: limited-fixed, limited-malleable, unlimited-fixed, and unlimited-malleable. In this paper, we investigated these four types of lay theories of gender differences in responses to functionality and aesthetics, and their different impacts on consumers’ gift shopping behavior. Interestingly, we found that the different gift shopping behaviors result from lay theories instead of actual preferences. In other words, the lay theories only influence consumers’ gift shopping behavior for others but NOT for shopping behavior for themselves.

**STUDY ONE**

In this study, we recruited one hundred and seventy-five volunteer consumers at a large shopping mall and asked them to complete a short survey about their gifting shopping behavior during the Christmas and New Year holiday in 2010, a busy time of gift shopping for many consumers. In particular, we asked them whether they have shopped or are planning to shop for one gift recently, what the gift was or would be, the gender and age of the person who would receive the gift. Then they were asked to indicate whether they focus more on the functionality or aesthetics of the gift in an 11-point scale. Subsequently, they completed a questionnaire on the measure of the limited/unlimited (two items) and fixed/malleable (two items) lay theories of gender differences in responding to functionality and aesthetics in seven-point scales anchored by “strongly disagree/strongly agree” adapted from Mukhopadhyay and Johar (2005) and Mukhopadhyay and Yeung (2010). Finally, they answered some demographic questions related to age, gender, etc. We also took record of the day and time when they completed the survey. The types of gifts were mentioned in a variety of product categories, including cell phone, necklace, clothes, shoes, MP3, laptop, mug, gloves, backpack, handbag, wallet, etc.

We found that limited-fixed male theorists on functionality who believe that females have limited and fixed ability to functionality are more likely to focus on aesthetics instead of functionality when choosing a gift for females. Limited-malleable male theorists on functionality focus more highly on functionality instead of aesthetics when choosing a gift for females.

However, limited-malleable female theorists on functionality who believe that females have limited and malleable ability to functionality are more likely to focus on aesthetics instead of functionality when choosing a gift for females. Unlimited-malleable female theorists on functionality focus more highly on functionality instead of aesthetics when choosing a gift for females.

**STUDY TWO**

This study aims to investigate the influence of lay theories on product choices consumers make for themselves. It is possible that male (female) consumers choose a gift that reflects their lay theories because their actual preferences influence their decision. Hence, in Study Two, we wanted to test this consideration, which may pose as an alternative explanation for the findings in Study One.

As in Study One, we measured the four types of lay theories. We also asked the degree to which participants pay attention to the functionality and aesthetics of a series of 10 product categories when they shop for products for THEMSELVES, including jackets, jeans, shoes, backpacks, wallets/purses, digital cameras, cell phones, laptops, watches, and table lamps. Interestingly, we found that the four types of lay theorists, limited-fixed, limited-malleable, unlimited-fixed, and unlimited-malleable theorists have no significant different preferences for functionality and aesthetics when they shop for these products for themselves. Therefore, it seems that lay theory of gender differences does not influence the actual shopping behavior for consumers themselves.

**REFERENCES**


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Most of our behavior starts with goal setting through which we get involved in goal pursuit (Locke and Latham, 1990). After this initial step we monitor our progress toward these goals, such as rewards in loyalty programs (Fishbach and Dhar, 2005). Progress can be conceived as the distance traveled from the initial state to the present state (i.e. work-done) and/or the remaining distance from the present state toward the end state (i.e. work-left; Carver and Scheier, 1998). Although both frames imply one another and thus are logically equivalent, research
on their impact on motivation in goal pursuit has failed to yield unequivocal results. The present work seeks to extend previous research by examining when progress framing affects motivation in goal pursuit.

In essence, information on goal progress can only be perceived as “diagnostic” when it is construed in relation to an initial state that is removed from the presence and some end state that is not yet attained. Under these conditions, information on progress may affect motivation in goal pursuit because it informs people on the accomplished and remaining distance and thus on the attainability of the goal and on the investments already made in order to attain it (Koo and Fishbach, 2008).

However, there is reason to assume that these effects of progress framing on motivation in goal striving will not hold for all people in all circumstances. That is, in order to have an effect, it requires that people actively relate information about where they are now to an initial state and/or to an end state, both of which are distant from the here and now (Bar-Anan, Liberman, and Trope, 2006). We propose that this tendency to actively relate progress information to distal states removed from the presence may be a function of people’s construal level (Trope and Liberman, 2010).

Thus, since progress cues inform people of the distance traveled from the initial state and/or the distance left to attain the end state, and since perceiving such goal distances as meaningful in goal pursuit requires people to actively transcend the here and now, it follows that if progress framing has an effect on motivation in goal pursuit it will mainly have so under high, rather than low construal level conditions when people have an abstract, rather than a concrete mindset.

EXPERIMENT 1

Experiment 1 was designed to test the hypothesis that the effect of progress framing on motivation is stronger for people induced with an abstract (vs. concrete) mindset. One hundred and fourteen undergraduate students were randomly assigned to the condition of a 2 x 2 (progress framing: work-left vs. work-done) x 2 (construal level: abstract vs. concrete) between-participants design. We used a letter identification task (Navon, 1977) to vary participants’ construal levels. Next, the manipulation of progress framing was administered as an evaluation task of a loyalty program (cf. Koo and Fishbach, 2008), followed by measuring participants’ motivation in goal pursuit.

Motivation was submitted to a 2 x 2 ANOVA with progress framing and construal level as independent variables. No main effect of construal level \( (F(1,110) = 1.45, n.s.) \) or progress framing \( (F(1,110) = 2.59, n.s.) \) was observed. However, the progress framing by construal level interaction was significant \( (F(1,110) = 7.52, p = .007) \). More specifically, under conditions of an abstract mindset, goal progress framed as work done produced higher motivation levels \( (M = 4.00; F(1,110) = 9.46, p = .003) \) than progress framed as work left \( (M = 2.89) \). For participants with a concrete mindset, type of progress framing failed to affect motivation in goal pursuit \( (M_{\text{work-done}} = 3.61 \text{ vs. } M_{\text{work-left}} = 3.90; F(1,110) = 1.19, n.s.) \).

EXPERIMENT 2

A key objective for the second study was to provide converging evidence, by using a trait measure of construal level. In addition, Experiment 2 sought to directly test the psychological process assumed to underlie the proposed effects.

A sample of one hundred twenty four loyalty card members were randomly assigned to a design with progress framing (work-done vs. work-left) as a between-subjects factor, and construal level as a continuous individual difference variable. The first part pertained to the manipulation of progress framing, presented as an evaluation task of a loyalty program, albeit with a different set-up than the one used in Experiment 1. This was followed by measures of perceived goal distance and motivation. For the second part, participants completed the trait construal level measure (BIF; Vallacher and Wegner, 1989).

A regression analysis with progress framing and construal level as the independent variables and motivation as the dependent variable replicated our findings from Experiment 1. Furthermore, the main effect of construal level on perceived goal distance was significant \( (\beta = .18, t(120) = 1.98, p = .05) \), in that people with a more abstract mindset perceived goal distance as larger. Additionally, a significant progress framing by construal level interaction was found \( (\beta = -.27, t(120) = -2.91, p = .004) \). In order to test for moderated mediation, we performed a simultaneous regression analysis in which the interaction, goal distance, and the progress framing and construal level main effect terms served as predictors for motivation. The results showed that the effect of the interaction disappeared \( (t < 1) \), whereas perceived goal distance remained a strong predictor \( (\beta = -.66, t(119) = -9.37, p < .001) \).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In two experiments we found that both state and chronic differences in experienced construal level modulate the impact of progress framing on motivation to pursue a reward in loyalty programs, such that type of framing only affected motivation of people with an abstract, but not a concrete mindset. Under these conditions, progress framed in terms of work-done produced increased motivation compared to a work-left frame. Moreover, perceived goal distance was found to mediate the impact of progress framing on motivation for individuals with an abstract, but not a concrete mindset. As such, the present work aids in resolving inconsistencies in the literature on the motivational impact of goal progress information, by identifying conditions where progress cues affect motivation and when they do not.

REFERENCES


The Configuration and Interplay of Consumer Practices within Consumer-Constitted Communities in Kenya

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This paper explores the interplay and configuration of practices as enacted by consumers within the context of ‘Chama’, a form of consumer-constitted community in Kenya. ‘Chama’ is the specific word used to refer to collectives very similar to the Rotating Savings and Credit Associations (ROSCAs), and is the term to be used in this paper to refer to ROSCA and other similar collectives. The roles of the Chama (and the rotating pot inherent therein) in enabling members to interact as consumers and fulfill their need to be part of a community (Cova 1997), to engage in consumption practices and ultimately meet varied consumption goals, position it as a fitting context to highlight how consumer practices emerge on a bedrock of such social-historically patterned collectives. The study is hence considered to fall within the consumer culture theory domain (Arnould and Thompson, 2005).

CONSUMER COMMUNITIES LITERATURE

Within consumer behavior literature, an increasing number of studies now focus on ways in which consumers organize themselves into social collectives or communities to meet various consumption goals. Such studies have been placed in the context of brand communities, both on virtual and physical space (e.g. Muniz Jnr and O’Guinn 2001) and consumer tribes (e.g. Cova et al. 2007). This literature has been useful in illuminating how such groups emerge and are maintained, and how different consumer practices consequently emerge (Schau et al, 2009). These studies have however been limited to western contexts, and there is a paucity of studies highlighting consumer-based collectives in non-western developing country contexts, and especially Africa. Despite their absence in consumer literature however, these collective do exist, albeit in different forms from those discussed in western contexts. Whereas brand communities and consumer tribes are ‘market-facing’ and constituted around marketplace resources and brands (Schau et al, 2009), those in non-western contexts are constituted along non-commercial lines, and are significantly influenced by the socio-historical structures within which they are (re)produced (Johnson 2004). These non-market based non-western forms of collectives are however understudied, and the study seeks to fill in this gap.

The study draws on the precepts of Actor Network Theory, which considers the interaction of both human and non-human elements key in the constitution of entities (Latour 2005). This is because existing literature on Chama presents it as an entity consisting of a number of elements including human participants, documents used (constitutions, rules and regulations); objects (the pot representing consumer savings, consumer durables acquired by participant); or actions (attending meetings, entertaining) (Arden 1964). By using ANT lens to analyze these interactions it is possible to account for outcomes that impact on consumer behaviour.

THE STUDY

This was a pilot study which employed an interpretivist perspective in order to understand the consumer environment and their lived experiences (Holbrook and O’Shaughnessy, 1988). Consistent with similar studies focusing on consumer communities (Schouten and McAlexander 1995) ethnographic methods were used, employing multiple data collection methods which included participant observation, individual as well as group interviews, informal conversations and photographs. In total, three Chama meetings were attended in participants’ homes; one with an urban middle-class group of professionals, one with a semi-urban group of affluent women and one with women from the slum area. The findings revealed three practices consistent across the three groups.

The first set, maintenance practices, revolved around activities that ensured that the Chama was constantly performed and maintained. For instance, in order to distribute saved funds, consumer participants met in one of their homes and feasted together. It was clear that the social benefits gained from entertaining and interacting with others during such meetings was more important for the consumers than receiving the funds. This is consistent with what Holt (1995) refers to as consumption as play, where consumers interact purely for autotelic purposes.

Support practices also emerged as important, as the participating consumers were actively involved in offering support to others in the group during occasions such as death of a loved one, birth, weddings and even during job losses. Such benevolent acts emanate from practices in the wider society in which members of the community participate in collective efforts to assist those facing misfortunes, in what is referred to as ‘Harambee’ in Kenya (Johnson 2004). As part of this practice for instance, members engaged in shopping activities, which required certain skills in identifying the appropriate items for the particular cause being supported. As posited by Warde (2005) to be a competent ‘practitioner’ requires one to possess the requisite goods and services, as well as the skills and competencies to be able to appropriate and deploy them as per the conventions of the practice.

Also prevalent were consumption control practices. Consumer self-control was highlighted as a significant reason for participating in Chama, as the consumers needed discipline to save for future purchases benefited from the collective support in Chama to do so. Some of the less affluent women indicated that they would go hungry on some nights in order to set aside some money for the Chama pot, as failure to do this incurred heavy fines from the others. Control was also enforced on how the funds saved were spent. In some instances, the group would buy household utensils for the consumer rather than give them the savings to enforce discipline. Chama hence acts as a pre-commitment