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Almost 50 years ago, the importance of focusing on marginalized consumers was brought to the attention of marketing scholars when the question was asked, “Do the poor pay more?” This triggered a cycle of research dealing with the problems of marginalized consumers that has continued to the present. While the two groups most frequently studied by marketing scholars have been ethnic minority consumers and those who are financially challenged, or poor, we recognize that the call for social justice in the marketplace extends to consumer segments that come in “all sizes, shapes, and colors.” Therefore, this year, as the Marketing and Public Policy Conference celebrates its 23rd year, we felt it most appropriate to select as our theme “Confluence of Marketing, Public Policy, and Social Justice: Changes, Challenges and Charges.”

Linking marketing and public policy to social justice has been a long-standing interest of scholars and researchers, and frequently over the years, related topics have been covered in the conference program. By adopting the chosen theme this year, we felt this would afford scholars and researchers an opportunity to take an even more active role in addressing the needs of marginalized consumers and striving for social justice in the marketplace. Although great strides have been made in marketplace fairness and leveling the playing field, we believe there are still ample opportunities for the field to focus on research addressing social injustices in the marketplace, including concerns about issues of poverty and whether the poor still pay more; race, ethnicity, gender, and other forms of marketplace discrimination; ecological concerns; ethics in certain marketing practices; Internet privacy; behavioral tracking; and so forth. In all these cases, the role of public policy is paramount.

The call for papers received an overwhelming response, far exceeding our expectations. What was especially gratifying was that our efforts to reach out to scholars and organizations beyond those who traditionally attend our conference were well received. As you can see from the conference program and proceedings, there are competitive papers and special sessions on a range of topics spanning areas that affect marginalized consumers and concerns for social justice, including recovery in disasters, marketing’s roles in the financial crisis, marketplace inclusion and exclusion, foreclosures and the housing crisis, marketing ethics, investigation of children as consumers, impoverished consumers and social marketing, privacy protection, covert marketing, disabled populations, and graphic visual health warnings on cigarette packaging, just to name a few.

We also had a diversified mix of scholars, authors, and presenters from the marketing discipline and nonmarketing disciplines, including researchers from schools of medicine. In terms of geographic diversity, there were scholars from all over the world, including representation from universities in Singapore, Australia, Denmark, China, Dubai, the United Kingdom, Scotland, Canada, Norway, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Turkey, New Zealand, and India. From the public sector, the program included representation from the Federal Reserve Board, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Food and Drug Administration Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. In addition, there were many other organizations represented in the program, including research firms and other private sector organizations, such as Sallie Mae, Family Resource Center/Ties That Bind, Nielsen, Breadwinners’ Insurance, Lubin Research, Whakauae Research Services, Know More Marketing, Research Triangle Institute, Kemp Transportation Systems, and Intellergy Research.

This year’s conference was preceded by the 5th Biennial Marketing and Public Policy Research Workshop and Doctoral Seminar. To be consistent with the theme of the conference, this year’s workshop encouraged research related to topics such as diversity and inclusion, multiculturalism and international populations, targeting vulnerable populations, behavioral targeting, and ethics. We thank the organizers of the workshop – namely, Pam Scholder Ellen, Ingrid Martin, Marlys Mason, Debra Scammon, and Joshua Wiener – and the numerous faculty members who developed workshop sessions and acted as mentors for workshop participants.

This year’s conference and preconference workshop would not have been possible without the support of many organizations and individuals. Our Planning Committee provided many valuable ideas that we incorporated into the program. We thank the AMA for its support in organizing and implementing the logistics of the conference. We
especially want to thank Jessica Thurmond Pohlonski, AMA Program Manager, for working with us every step of the way in planning and implementing a successful conference. Most important, we thank the reviewers for all their hard work in assisting us in processing the 120 competitive paper and special session submissions we received. Without their support, we would not have been able to produce a conference program that advances marketing thought on public policy issues, with a special emphasis on social justice and marginalized consumers.

Several other organizations and individuals generously contributed their time and financial resources to help make the 2012 Marketing and Public Policy Conference a success. The workshop and conference would not have been possible without the generous support of the Marketing Science Institute; the Center for Urban Entrepreneurship & Economic Development in the Rutgers Business School; the AMA Academic Council; and several AMA Special Interest Groups (SIGs), including Marketing and Society, Marketing Communications, and Consumer Behavior. As cochairs, we especially want to thank our respective institutions, namely, the University of Texas at Austin and Rutgers Business School-Newark and New Brunswick, for supporting us and allowing us to serve in this capacity as a service to the profession.

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**AFRO-DESCENDENTS IN CHILDREN’S TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENTS: A CONTENT ANALYSIS STUDY IN THE BRAZILIAN CONTEXT**

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**ABSTRACT**

The objective of this article is to understand representations of Afro-descendants in advertisements directed at children. Content Analysis was applied to analyze 86 advertisements of toys, footwear, clothing, and food. The results showed this ethnic group is represented in secondary roles, in non-family relationships and less frequently represented as adults.

**INTRODUCTION**

Researchers investigating the subject of equity in the media are concerned about the impact of media images on society. More specifically, the representation of ethnic minorities in the media has been studied by scholars since the late sixties, as for example, Bowen and Schmid (1997); Bush, Resnik, and Stern (1980); Bush, Solomon, and Hair (1977); Dominick and Greenberg (1970); Hae and Reece (2003); Humphrey and Schuman (1984); Kassarjian (1969); Mastro and Stern (2003); Ortizano (1989); Taylor and Ju (1994); Taylor, Landreth, and Hae (2005) and Zinkhan, Qualls, and Biswal (1990). Nevertheless, in Brazil, since the seventies, race relations in the media have also been examined by researchers from several branches of knowledge, such as Acevedo and Nohara (2008, 2010); Barbosa (2004); Carvalho (2004); Guimarães (2000, 2004); Pacheco (2001); Pavan and Oliveira (2005); Rah-ier (2001); Rosenberg, Bazilli, and Silva (2003); Roso, Strey, Guareschi, and Bueno (2002); AC Silva (1999); PVB Silva (2005) and Sovik (2002) to mention a few.

Investigations related to representations of Afro-descendants in the media in Brazil are welcome because, in spite of this group constituting 50.7 percent (being that the Mulattos are 43.1% and Negros 7.6%) of the population of the country (Varella 2011), most studies have shown that compared to the composition of the population, it is still, percentage wise, little portrayed in the media (Araújo 2000; Barbosa 2004; Guimarães 2004).

In general, the investigations show that the roles associated with the Afro-descendants are impregnated with social stigmas (Barbosa 2004; Carvalho 2003; Rodrigues 2001). The analyses of speech in the media reveal depreciation of that ethnic group. In fact, research on the subject has identified that the new stigmatization strategies of Afro-descendants in the media are more subtle and complex. Such forms of discrimination have been called both as neo-racism as well as, Brazilian racism (Silva and Rosemberg 2008). Studies on the subject pointed out that the messages in the media reflect the racism that is ingrained in Brazilian society (Araújo 2000; Carone and Bento 2003; Carvalho 2003; Rodrigues 2001).

There are several theories in literature that explain why the images in the media influence viewers. According to the social learning theory, for example, people learn about values and behavior by means of observation of attitudes and the behavior of other individuals. Thus, the transmission of certain representations and ideas influences learning about the same (Bandura 1971). The “ultivation” theory proposed by Gerbner, Gross, and Melody (1973), asserts that continuous exposure to a particular representation or idea can create and cultivate attitudes consistent to them. The “expectation” theory (Jussim 1990), in turn, argues that people tend to behave in accordance to the expectations established by the stereotypes presented to them.

It is on this context of concern that the present investigation is founded. The goal of the research is to examine what, and how, representations of Afro-descendants in advertisements are directed at children.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

*Studies on Race Relations in the Media*

Some studies (Hae and Reece 2003; Wilkes and Valencia 1989) showed that, from the 1970s, there has been an increase in the numerical representation of Afro-descendants in the media (Bristor, Lee, and Hunt 1995; Bush et al. 1977; Dominick and Greenberg 1970; Hae and Reece 2003). However, the vast majority of research indicates that Afro-descendants are still under-represented.
in comparison to their proportion in the population. Such investigations have also shown that these speeches are impregnated with racist ideologies (Barbosa 2004; Bowen and Schmid 1997; Domingues 2002; Rodrigues 2001; Rosemberg et al. 2003; Roso et al. 2002).

Nevertheless, research also identified that when the contents of the communication is multiracial, the total number of characters is much greater than when there are only whites. Rarer still are the pieces exclusively with Afro-descendant models (Bowen and Schmid 1997; Bristor et al. 1995; Hae and Reece 2003; Mastro and Stern 2003; Pinto 1987; Rosemberg et al. 2003; Taylor et al. 2005; Wilkes and Valencia 1989).

In relation to the importance of the roles played by different ethnic groups, most studies have revealed that, in general, Afro-descendants are playing, either secondary roles or as extras (Bowen and Schmid 1997; Bristor et al. 1995; Domingues 2002; Hae and Reece 2003; Licata and Biswas 1993; Mastro and Stern 2003; Pinto 1987; Seiter 1990).

The investigations also show that generally, the interactions between Afro-descendants and whites involve work or business situations. Interactions are rarely found concerning family environments. It was also noted that it is more common that the interactions occur between children of the two ethnicities, or between children or Afro-descendant adolescents and white adults. The research also revealed that there are few scenes in which Afro-descendants and Caucasians interact or even where the descendant is presented alone (Bowen and Schmid 1997; Bristor et al. 1995; Hae and Reece 2003; Silva and Rosemberg 2008; Taylor et al. 2005; Taylor and Stern 1997).

In relation to the social roles of the characters, most research shows that the roles represented by Afro-descendants are stigmatized and poorly diversified. The most common are, for example, athletes, poorly paid laborers, musicians or actors (Araújo 2000; Bristor et al. 1995; Greenberg and Brand 1993; Licata and Biswas 1993; Rodrigues 2001). Some of the most common are the stereotypes of criminals, prostitutes and slums (Bristor et al. 1995; Chinellato 1996; Rahier 2001; Rodrigues 2001). In the context of the cinema, Rodrigues (2001) identified the following stereotypes: the slave, the old Negro, the martyr, the noble savage, the angry Negro, the crazy Creole, among others. In research on the soap operas, Araújo (2000) mentions the black servant mother, the good guy, the childish Negro girl, the Guardian Angel, the naughty Negro, the friend of the white hero, the Negro with a white soul, the Carioca crook, among others. From the literature review this study presents the following assumptions:

(H)_1: In comparison to Caucasians, Afro-descendants are under-represented in relation to their composition in the population;
(H)_2: In comparison to Caucasians, Afro-descendants tend to be less represented in leading roles;
(H)_3: In comparison to Caucasians, Afro-descendants tend to be represented in non-family inter-relationships; (H)_4: In comparison to Caucasians, the Afro-descendants tend to be represented more as children and teenagers than as adults or elderly.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

The data were analyzed using the technique of *content analysis* as proposed by Berelson (1952) and Kassarjian (1977). The authors claim that content analysis is a technique employed to investigate the manifest content of communication and that its main features are *quantification*, *objectivity*, *systematization*, and *reliability*.

From the characteristics of content analysis, there are several procedures required by the technique. They are: (1) definition of a period of analysis with which you will work; (2) definition of a universe of documents from which the samples shall be withdrawn; (3) selection of the sample; (4) selection of a unit of measurement; (5) definition of analysis categories; (6) establishment of operational definitions to distinguish the analysis categories from the other; (7) conducting of a pre-test of the categories; (8) use of encoders to evaluate the contents of materials and sort them into already determined categories; (9) following the norm that encoders must not be researchers and should work independently from the other; (10) conduct training for judges before they make the analysis of the material; (11) using a *concordance index* (reliability) to measure the correlation between the judgments of the judges; (12) make statistical processing and analysis of data; (13) accurately describe in the submitted report of the work and which were the rules and procedures used in the technique (Berelson 1952; Kassarjian 1977; Kolbe and Burnett 1991).

The analysis period in this study was from 2002 to 2010. The unit of measure is commercial television (advertising). The research universe has been established as television advertisements that advertise products for children between six and twelve years of age and have human beings as characters. To compose the sample, the following products were defined as clippings: toys, footwear, clothing, and food. From these criteria 503 advertisements which used human characters were identified. The commercials for this research were selected from the
Data were analyzed using qui square statistical technique. It is worthy to note that although the focus of the study resides in characterization of representations of Afro-descendants in propaganda data for the Asian Group were computed, but only in order to be able to calculate the qui square, since the technique requires a minimum number of classes to be able to do the calculation thereof.

In this study the categories, their definitions and implementation indicators have been defined based on previous researches. In addition, care was taken to pre-test all categories and indicators. Four analysis categories were used: the demographic quantification, the importance of the characters, the interaction of the characters and their age. The operational definitions of these categories were as follows:

1. **Demographic quantification**: number of characters by ethnicity presented in advertisements.

2. **The character’s importance**: The character’s importance is measured by the type of role played: if it is principal, secondary or accessory. **Lead role**: character is in the spotlight: (a) Is in the center of the scene or in the center of the camera; (b) Gets more time on display on the screen. (c) Speaks longer than another character; (d) Holds the product; (e) Is doing an activity; (f) Is assigned a proper name; (g) Character talks about the product or holds it. **Secondary Role**: Character is not in the spotlight: (a) Is at the corner of the scene; (b) Is seen for a short time on the screen; (c) Does not speak or talks little in comparison to another character; (d) Does not hold the product; (e) Does not exercise any activity; (f) Is not given a proper name; **Accessory Role**: (a) Person that appears in the background of the scene (can appear in a crowd); (b) Is difficult to locate them in the advertisement; (c) Is not important for the theme of propaganda; (d) Is less important than the secondary role.

3. **Type of interaction with other characters**: interactions between characters. (a) **Family Interaction** – includes relationships between husband and wife or between members of the family, like children, uncles, grandparents, cousins; (b) **Social interaction** – includes relationship with friends or with other people; (c) **Work interaction**: relationship between members or employees in a particular company. They are people who are employed by the same company or companies that they have relationships with. They may be colleagues of the same occupation or profession, even though they are working for different companies. Any relationship between employees or professionals who are in professional contact or work together; (d) **Impersonal interaction**: More than one character appears in the scene, but there is no apparent relationship between the characters; (e) **Solitary**: the character is alone; and (f) **Another type of relationship**: any other different relationship to those described above.

4. **Age of the characters**: refers to the approximate age of the character. Four categories were adopted: child, teen, adult, elderly. Children: 0 to 14 years; Young/Adolescent: 15 to 24 years; Adult: 25 to 54 years; Elderly: above 55 years.

Two coders were used to classify the communication material. They were trained, worked independently and were not chosen from among the researchers and authors of this work. The index of agreement (reliability) between these two judges was also calculated. The index was calculated stemming from the product of the division between the total number of agreements of the coders by the total number of decisions made by them.

**RESULTS**

Of the four sectors examined in this survey: toys, shoes, clothing, and food; 503 advertisements were identified as featuring human characters. Of these, only 86 (17%) had Afro-descendants. For this reason, only 86 advertisements that contain Afro-descendants were studied with the aim of analyzing the ways in which the characters were presented. Thus, it was identified that among the 86 advertisements there were a total of 913 characters. Of these, 700 (76.7%) were Caucasian, 173 (18.9%) Afro-descendants and 40 (4.4%) Asians.

The composition of Caucasians and Afro-Brazilian population is respectively of 47.7 percent and 50.7 percent (being that the Mulattos are 43.1% and Blacks 7.6%). Thus, comparing the data, one can see that the proportion of Caucasians in the population (47.7%) is less than in advertisements studied (76.7%) and the percentage of Afro-descendants is larger in the population (50.7%) and lower in the advertisements (18.9%). In other words, the advertisements do not reflect the reality of the composition of ethnic groups in Brazilian society. This way, the first hypothesis ($H_1$): In comparison with Caucasians, the Afro-descendants are under-represented in relation to their composition in the population) was confirmed.
In relation to the importance of the roles, the results of the survey showed that Caucasians have been featured in leading roles more frequently than other ethnic groups. Table 1 presents the percentages of the characters of each ethnicity in secondary leading roles, and extras on the basis of the 913 characters presented in 86 advertisements (of which 700 are Caucasian, 173 Afro-descendant and 40 Asian). One verifies that the greatest number of characters of any ethnic group is among the supporting roles. But of all 913 characters presented in analyzed advertisements, 20.7 percent are Caucasian in leading roles, while only 3.7 percent of Afro-descendants and 0.4 percent of Asians occupy these roles. Qui square showed that the differences are significant (Qui square 37.636, gl = 4, p < 0.05). Thus, hypothesis 2 was confirmed.

In relation to the interaction between the characters, in every ethnic group the relationships mostly represented are social interactions. The ethnicity that appears more in family interactions is Caucasian. This fact can be seen both in Table 2 and Table 3. Table 2 presents the interactions based on 100 percent total characters (913) identified in advertisements. Thus, we note that 6.6 percent of the family interactions are represented by Caucasians, while for the Afro-descendant that number is 1.1 percent. In Table 3, which is based on 100 percent of the total number of characters of each ethnicity, one can also verify that Caucasians accounted for 8.6 percent of family interactions. However, in this type of inter-relationship the Afro-descendants make up just 5.8 percent. In this same Table, you can also see that in working relationships that these numbers are different. The Afro-descendants are 9.8 percent and 1.4 percent Caucasian. It is interesting to note that the percentage of Afro-descendants that appear alone is greater than the percentage of Caucasians (in Table 3: 8.1% and 6.1% respectively). The Qui-square was also significant (Qui square 49.611; gl = 10; p < 0.05). Thus, the hypothesis 3 (H₃; compared with Caucasians the Afro-descendants tend to be represented in non-family interrelationships) has also been confirmed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1</th>
<th>Importance of Roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roles</td>
<td>CC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessory</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CC = Caucasians; afrod. = Afro-descendants; persong. = characters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2</th>
<th>The Interaction Between the Characters (Base 100% = 913 Characters)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>CC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impersonal</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CC = Caucasian; Afrod = Afro-descendant
In relation to the age of the characters (see Table 4) one can see that regardless of the ethnicity, most of the characters are children (52.1%, 11.7% Caucasian and Afro-descendant). This can be explained by the fact that the advertisements are targeted at children. Little more than twenty percent (20.6%) of the adults in advertisements are Caucasian and only 6.9 percent of them are Afro-descendants. However, it appears that there is no elderly Afro-descendant, and that there are only 3 teenagers of that ethnicity. Among the Caucasian, these groups make up 1.1 percent and 2.8 percent respectively. Qui square was also significant for this category (Qui-square = 21.635 gl = 6 p < 005). Thus, the hypothesis 4 (H4; compared to Caucasians, the Afro-descendants tend to be represented more as children and teenagers than as adults or elderly people) was also confirmed.

**DISCUSSION**

The study results suggest that in terms of ethnic presence, the symbolic world represented in television advertisements for children is predominantly white. Indeed in comparison with the percentage of Afro-descendants in the Brazilian population, this group is poorly represented in advertising to children. These data are consistent with a lot of research on this group’s representation in the media (Barbosa 2004; Domingues 2002; Rodrigues 2001; Rosemberg et al. 2003; Roso et al. 2002). However, this fact is not healthy for ethnic minorities, since the lack of models of their own ethnicity on which children of that group can model themselves and generate a feeling of social invisibility, triggering processes of misunderstanding of themselves and of their ancestry, producing an ethnic identity crisis (Domingues 2002; Guimarães 2000, 2004).

This research found the same elements of discrimination appointed by previous studies. Thus, for example, the Afro-descendants never appear as an isolated group. In the advertisements analyzed, what happens is that alongside the Afro-descendant there are always a lot of Caucasians. The pattern of the advertisements studied is having multiple Caucasians and one or at most two Afro-descendants.

Social learning theory asserts that people learn by observing other people’s behavior (Bandura 1971). The predominance of the image of the group of Caucasians in the

**TABLE 3**

Interactions Between the Characters (Base 100% in Each Ethnic Group)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Caucasians</th>
<th>Afro-Descendents</th>
<th>Asians</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>77.7%</td>
<td>71.1%</td>
<td>85.0%</td>
<td>76.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impersonal</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 4**

Age of the Characters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>CC</th>
<th>% Total</th>
<th>% Total</th>
<th>% Total</th>
<th>% Total</th>
<th>Total Identified</th>
<th>% Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elderly</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teenager</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>67.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>76.7%</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>913</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Marketing and Public Policy Conference Proceedings / 2012*
media may cause the children of this ethnic group to have difficulty in understanding and respecting cultural and ethnic differences.

The theory of cultivation, proposal by Gerbner et al. (1973) proposes that continuous exposure to a given image or idea can create and cultivate attitudes consistent with them. The data of this survey reveal that the Afro-descendants, compared to Caucasians, are presented less in family relationships and more in working relationships. Such images may suggest that the relations between different ethnic groups should be distant and superficial, only materialized in impersonal sites such as in work environments.

The theory of “expectation” (Jussim 1990), in turn, states that minorities tend to behave according to pre-established expectations by the stereotypes presented to them. Thus, it can be assumed that the representations of Afro-descendants in the media can lead the children of this ethnic group to have behavior patterns such as those imposed upon them.

The fact that Afro-descendants were little represented in advertisements and filed minor roles in the media helps to reproduce and expand relations of domination, sustaining asymmetrical relationships of power of whites over Afro-descendants. In addition, the control of whites in the world of advertising reinforces the ideology of whitening whose goal is to cause an assimilation of values, attitudes and behavior of whites by the Afro-descendants, leading the latter to develop prejudice in relation to the roots of blackness, and thus reinforcing the process of exclusion and stigmatization of outsiders.

One of the possible explanations for the super representation of Caucasians in advertisements, in comparison with its composition in the population, is the fact that the established use, as a strategy of domination, the over exposing of themselves and their value, in order for outsiders to desire to have their position and image (Elias and Scotson 2000).

The stigma of social roles of Afro-descendants in advertisements, through strategy to represent them by means of minor characters, is related to the collective fantasy of the dominant group. It reflects and justifies the bias of this group towards minorities. The stigmas related to color or other ethnic characteristics have an “objectifying” function. The physical signal becomes a tangible symbol of inferiority, of minority human value. The mention of the phenotypic signs aims to justify the imbalance in the distribution of economic resources, in addition to having an “exculpatory” function (Elias and Scotson 2000; Goffman 1988). Such stigmatizations are dangerous because they can damage self-esteem and self-image of discriminated groups (Carvalho 2003; Stam 1997), affecting the understanding that they have of themselves (Araújo 2000; Duckitt 1992; Taylor and Stern 1997; Wilkes and Valencia 1989).

**CONCLUSION**

The survey results show that the images of advertisements on television can bring negative impacts on children. The fact of Afro-descendant children not seeing their ethnic group represented in the content of television advertisements can cause them to have problems related to self-esteem or identity.

Public policies related to the regulation of advertisements on television should ensure that there are ethnic minorities in the same proportion as they appear in the population, in addition to ensuring that they perform important roles and free of social stigmas.

The strategists of public policies related to the mass media should be aware of the fact that if the symbolic world of propaganda is predominantly white, it is reinforcing the elements that are behind the ideology of whitening. In fact, the consequences of the ideology of whitening for Afro-descendants are quite harmful, such as the denial of his own appearance, denial of his ancestry, a strong feeling of inferiority and negative self-image. In addition, it must be borne in mind that, the more profound the traumas of racism, the more the descendant adjusts its behavior and attitudes to the ideology of whitening; and the greater the racist attacks are, the more profound the traumas become. It is important to note that the peculiarity of this ideology is to transform the broken down into a discriminatory discourse player agent, putting him at the service of a racist homeland (Domingues 2002; Seyferth 1986, 1993, 1995, 2002). This is why it is essential to have the control of ideological representations in the mass media.

Nevertheless, it is essential that the shapers of public policies realize that the social stigma, in the case of minor roles, imposed by the dominant group (the Caucasians) tends to impregnate the self-esteem and self-image of outsiders (the Afro). In addition, it is important to keep in mind that stigmatized minorities tend to assimilate social or moral values of dominant ideologies and in this way, end up evaluating themselves from the negative representations elaborated by the group of the strongest power (Domingues 2002; Major and O’Brien 2005). Thus, all
these facts indicate that it is important that there be a regulation of ethnic minority representations in advertisements, especially those that are directed at children.

The speech of a more diverse society, open and comprehensive in relation to differences, must be backed by contents that are presented in the media. This way, the advertisements must also contribute to socialize children accordingly.

In the same manner as other studies, this work also has some limitations. One is to have analyzed just television advertisements and only a certain group of advertisements (toys, footwear, garments and food). Future studies could examine other types of advertisements (printed or internet) or other television contents (cartoon or children’s programs, for example). In addition, the study involved analysis of only four categories of representations. Future research could involve the study of other categories that are mentioned by researches of the area, as the place where the character is presented (school, home, restaurant, outdoor locations, indoors) product type, the character’s profession and imbalance of power between the characters. These categories help you understand if there is subtle stigma in the contents of communication.

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THE EFFECT OF PARENTAL STRATEGIES ON SELF-BRAND CONNECTIONS IN YOUNG CONSUMERS

Farrah Arif, University of Cambridge

SUMMARY

Some social scientists highlight the conspicuous use of brands amongst young people and describe them as “bonded to brands” and “branded babies” (Linn 2005; Schor 2005). They criticize this commercialization of childhood, which has made young people materialistic and consumption oriented individuals. Further, previous consumer research indicates that young people’s association with brands is socially motivated, and they develop relationships with brands because brands reflect who they are to others (Chaplin and John 2005; Chaplin and Lowrey 2010; Elliott and Leonard 2004; Robinson and Kates 2005). In addition, Chaplin and John (2005) suggest that young consumers, like adults, also develop self-brand connections (SBC). SBC is a form of brand relationship that reflects the extent to which an individual incorporates a brand into his/her self-concept to communicate one’s self to others (Escalas and Bettman 2003). However, Chaplin and John (2005) only focused on the differential effects of age and suggest that young consumers start developing SBC between middle childhood and early adolescence.

Although the social motivation for owning brands is a recurring theme in previous research on young consumers, it has paid little attention to the role of predominant socialization agents, such as parents and peers, who play an important role in shaping consumer attitudes and behavior (John 1999; Moschis and Churchill, Jr. 1978). The current study factors in the social context of consumption to address this gap. Specifically, it focuses on the underlying social mechanism of the development of SBC. It suggests a possibility that young consumers could separate their sense of self with popular brands, thereby reducing reliance on such brands for social approval. It would be possible, if parents give consumer education and guidance to young people through monitoring their buying decision making.

A socialization model is proposed and tested to elucidate the underlying mechanism of the development of SBC in young consumers (11–15 years old). In the current research, SBC is considered a consumption motive that enables adolescents to seek group affiliation. It is suggested that certain brands “symbolize group identity and a sense of belonging to distinct social groups” (John 2008). Therefore, young consumers link brand consumption to their self-identity and in the process develop SBC for social approval (Chaplin and John 2005).

It is argued that parental strategy towards their children’s buying decision-making plays an important indirect role in the development of SBC. Some parents might reduce their role in buying-decision making of young people due to several reasons. For example, avoiding ridicule (Wooten 2006); giving more independence in the expectation of boosting children’s confidence (Schor 2005); substituting for quality time spent with children (McNeal 1999). The reduction of parental input makes them more independent (from parents) but not necessarily from peers, and so in the vacuum of parental input, they are pushed towards the influence of peers. Moreover, when the need to belong to peers increases, young consumers become more susceptible to peer influences, and it would lead to stronger SBC for social approval. However, some parents might be monitoring their children’s buying decision-making. This strategy enables parents to reinforce their rules and expectations for young consumers’ purchases, which leads to social construction and thus, they engage in a dialogue with parents (Hunter 1985). This parent-child communication is perceived as a sign of caring by young people (Bugental and Grusec 2006). It also affects the selection of peers and steers them away from the peers who oppose parental views on consumption (Collins et al. 2000). In the process, they become more susceptible to the views of their parents. Further, a strong relationship with parents provides social support, decreases the level of insecurity, and boost self-esteem (Dumas et al. 2009). Some parents also stress on rational use of brands (Moschis 1985). In the presence of a significant role of parents, young people might not use brands as an identification mark (Rodhain 2006), and it would lead to lower SBC.

To test the proposed model, a survey in a classroom setting was conducted with 555 pupils from seventh to tenth grades state-run secondary schools in Cambridge, U.K. The questionnaire was developed with the items used in previous studies. However, the items and the questionnaire were pretested and adapted according to the age
group involved. The proposed model was run with structural equations modeling. The data showed an acceptable fit to the proposed model.

In summary, the study links socialization research with the development of SBC in young consumers. The previous such research has largely considered the role of peers as a predominant factor in young people’s consumption attitudes and behaviors (Chaplin and John 2005; Elliott and Leonard 2004; Pechmann et al. 2003; Rodhain 2006). On the contrary, this research emphasizes on the role of parents towards young peoples’ buying-decision making. Recently, it is reported that parents and children are being “brand bullied” alike, and they are forced to associate to certain brands for peer approval (Nairn 2011). From public policy and parents’ perspective, this research makes parents and policy makers aware of the implications of monitoring of children’s buying-decision making. It is suggested that parental intervention helps in educating young people about the role of brands in their lives; reduces a desire of a young consumer to express oneself with popular brands; helps young consumers to focus on their values, social skills etc. to get peer acceptance rather than focusing on popular brands. References are available upon request.

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Peer-pressure thrives among high school females, especially for prom and other school-sponsored events. Business and scholars yet to understand the importance of social identity in peer groups and why some young women resist prom or related events. Hence, the objective is to consider susceptibility and resistance to neutral or anti-social behavior among young women in the context of prom attitudes and behaviors. In doing so, the authors contribute a typology of prom event-goers. This contribution extends knowledge on the role of group identification in Social Identity Theory (SIT). The four groups of young women are: enforced resisters, emotional resisters, low-level resisters and event ambassadors. These types differ in their attitudes and behaviors (high/low) and social identity with their peers. Such event resistance often co-exists with peer-pressure (e.g., to drink underage or to have sex), parental pressure, group norms, socio-cultural considerations, and expectations about prom from the media and past students. There are implications for scholars interested in special events, peer-pressure, adolescents, females, or social identity. Further, these findings lend to implications for school policy and businesses catering to the prom market.

Key Words: Event Marketing, Special Events, Adolescents, Prom, Peer-Pressure, Peer Groups, Social Identity, Resistance, Female Consumer Behavior.

A TYPOLOGY OF FEMALE EVENT RESISTOR AND AMBASSADOR EXPERIENCES

Social Groups, Peer-Pressure and the Prom

“For millions of high-schoolers, prom night is the biggest event of their young lives” (Smith 2004). The American prom is big for business. Purveyors of prom-related products totaled a $2.75 billion market in 2002 (Ribitzky 2002) and grew to $4 billion by 2011 (Canning 2011). Teenage girls are the main target market for prom, as some would term the prom a practice ritual for their wedding. Women are said to have two memorable dresses in their lives – their prom dress and their wedding dress. These young women (and their parents) are considerable spenders. While the men traditionally rent a tux and may purchase a corsage for their date, the women tend to be more concerned with their looks as a part of their emerging social identity. To this point, thirteen to nineteen-year-old females spend $31 billion on beauty and fashion (Ribitzky 2002). Many teen girls and their peer-groups desire to look special on their prom night at all costs, and businesses and service industries (e.g., event venues, restaurants, formalwear, florists, hotels, salons, and spas) depend on these desires to spike spring sales.

Yet, peer-pressure and developing social identities compound a “need” to go all out for prom. Peer-pressure to engage in underage drinking, sex, or challenge school-sponsored activities reflects the trend for adolescent females and their cliques to attitudinally resist or even skip their prom. Of course, these pressures and impending resentment is troublesome for businesses and for the well being of young women. Businesses and social theorists alike are interested in why and what types/levels of resistance manifest in markets related to special events. In many ways, resistance concerns anti-conformity in and out of the marketplace.

Social Identity Theory is a guiding theoretical lens to illuminate how peer social groups influence susceptibility and resistance to life events such as prom. This perspective is helpful because connecting, separating, alternating and negotiating characterizes adolescent behavior.

Hence, the objective is to consider susceptibility and resistance to both neutral and anti-social behavior among young women in the context of high-school prom events.

In doing so, a secondary contribution exists as the resulting typology can expand knowledge on the role of group identification in Social Identity Theory (SIT). The authors use a SIT position to introduce cliques and groups, the role of peer-pressure in such groups, and then specifically female behavior in such groups. The authors then present the methods and the resulting typology, along with limitations, implications, and future inquiries.
Popularity, Cliques and Social Group Identities

Social identity is intertwined with social groups. Most adolescents belong to a comprehensive system of peer relationships known as cliques. Varying in size (from three to ten with an average of five members) (Ennett, Bauman, and Koch 1994), the majority of members are similar in age and gender. Members tend to be similar in ethnicity (Brown 2004). Adolescent behavior is impacted by the value of cliques, and these relationships influence adolescent adjustment (Wilkinson and Kraljevic 2004).

Eder (1985) illustrated that ‘popular’ cliques generally comprise adolescents from wealthier families. However, membership may not guarantee approval. Although selected individuals can become part of the popular crowd, positive perceptions of the individual are subject to change when peers outside the popular group change their attitudes towards him/her. If the individual increasingly gives their time and attention to the popular clique, their own status can be affected and they could be perceived as arrogant. This is relevant in the context of the high-school prom where peers, for example, select a well-liked student for the prom committee, but then resent the student (see Adler and Adler 1998). Known as the cycle of popularity (Eder 1985), it demonstrates that being associated with a popular clique may negatively impact social standing (see Mayeux, Sandstrom, and Cillessen 2008). This cycle of popularity may also impact the degree of peer behavioral or attitudinal resistance towards prom attendance. This suggests that striving for status via popular clique association may result in the loss of warmth among peers (Deci and Ryan 2000).

Role of Peer-Pressure in Social Groups

Anti-conformity is directly the result of peer influence processes. Adolescents believe they are signaling individuality with anti-conformity, not realizing the power of peer influence because anti-conformity is the opposite of what the majority prefers (Brechwald and Prinstein 2011). It is essential to understand the inter-relationship between group engagement (micro-level) and cultural beliefs (macro-level) and especially how these may influence adolescents’ resistance to peer-pressure (Bamaca and Umana-Taylor 2006).

Adolescents are not always influenced by peer-pressure as they strive for personal satisfaction (Nguyen, Bradford, and Brown 2010) and their compliance with the social expectations of attending their high-school prom event will depend on how important it is for him/her to be part of a social group to alleviate isolation (Pickett, Silver, and Brewer 2002). In some cases, refusal to adhere to pertinent or respected social norms may result in social punishment with peers being rejected by the group (Juvenon and Galvan 2008).

During adolescence, peers become the main source of emotional support, providing intimacy and disclosure (Wilkinson 2008). This may be especially true for females, who may seek to reinforce an identity position by associating (or disassociating) with particular peer groups. Previous work in social identity shows that female adolescents are more likely than young men to develop intimacy with cliques (Youniss and Haynie 1992). Peers regularly test one other, questioning one’s ability to illustrate commitment to the collective (Erikson 1963). This questioning is generally referred to as peer-pressure.

There are different types and varying degrees of susceptibility to peer-pressure. Peer-pressure can influence anti-social behavior (see Kandel 1996; Pechmann and Knight 2002). Whilst young women are less likely to behave in a resistant manner, for instance via vandalism, underage drinking, or smoking, young men show their feelings externally (Santor, Messervy, and Kusumakar 2000). Females, also susceptible to peer-pressure, may keep their behaviors in line, while hosting negative attitudes.

Peer-pressure does not need to have a negative influence on young women. Neutral susceptibility (Sim and Koh 2003) is the degree to which peers can impact behavior in situations that are not inclined to resistance. For examples, peer-pressure can impact brand choice (Wooten and Reed 2004) or shopping behavior (Rose, Boush, and Friestad 1998; Mangleburg, Doney, and Bristol 2004). Limited studies have identified that there is no gender difference for neutral susceptibility (Santor et al. 2000).

SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY AND EVENT RESISTANCE

Here, the authors extend SIT theory by showing how embracing or resisting an event grants rewards including group identification and relationship facilitation.

Social Identity Theory (SIT)

Social Identity Theory (hence, SIT) is a theory that can help explain and predict behavior including why a student chooses to embrace or resist their prom event, thereby identifying with the group or clique. SIT posits that individual identities are formed through the groups to which they belong (Tajfel and Turner 1986; Tajfel 1982). According to the theory, people build their personal identities from their group (or anti-group) memberships (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, and Flament 1971). Therefore,
one’s group membership defines identity. Here, a high-school student may be part of the popular clique who serves on the prom committee, and this student’s identity is in part defined by this group membership. Other salient group memberships relevant in high school include their membership in sports teams, advanced placement classes, and extra-curricular activities.

Individuals tend to desire to be part of a group that has a positive image and that is perceived as high status. The condition for this to occur is that there must be other (inferior) groups to compare to. That is, perceiving your group (e.g., cheerleaders) as superior entails having a group that is perceived to be inferior to in essence, look down upon. With this in mind, there is a motivation to make one’s group or clique seem more superior because it bolsters the group member’s identity. In turn, individuals have a motivation to enhance the status of their group compared to other groups.

Social identity is distinct from personal identity, which is derived from individuals’ personal characteristics and their own relationships. In SIT, group is defined in a cognitive sense; namely an adolescent’s self-conception is a group member (or anti-group member). These people construe themselves with shared attributes to distinguish them from others. Breakwell (1978) studied adolescent soccer fans in groups of those who attended most games versus groups of fans who did not. Interestingly, the group that did not attend games was the most striking about their team loyalty and they demonstrated the most in-group bias. One explanation is this group had a larger need to prove themselves as a true fan. SIT focuses on self-conception in group processes, intergroup relations, and group membership. With SIT, individual processes cannot explain collective phenomena. It is a broad theory in the sense that it entails aspects of consumer motivation, social-cognition, and social aspects of life as a group member.

**Defining Event-Resistance and Event-Ambassadorship**

Event resistance is both a behavior and an attitude. While some students may have resistant attitudes, one is still considered prom resistant if he/she begrudgingly attends their prom while maintaining an apathetic attitude before, during, and after the event. Behaviorally, the attitudinally resistant prom-goer may resist the other groups and/or event rituals such as corsage exchange, photograph sessions, dinners, dancing, and participation in voting for a prom queen and king. Conversely, positive attitude and behavior towards the prom can produce an individual who not only embraces the prom but promotes attendance.

Resistance, in the marketing context, may apply at various levels, ranging from a mere gift-resistance (e.g., to the corsage) to a broad event-resistance (e.g., to the prom event itself), which will be defined here. Definitions of gift-resistance, market-resistance, and retail-resistance are available from Close and Zinkhan (2009), while the authors propose a definition of event-resistance here. **Event-resistance** is when a consumer does not participate, attend, nor engage in an otherwise-recognized event for personal reasons. For example, researchers could examine event-resistance in the context of weddings, reunions, holiday celebrations, birthdays, religious celebrations, or other recurring, ritualistic events. Resistance may entail procrastination to purchase (or attend an event), if at all. There are different types of event-resistors, revealed here. As not all resist, the authors introduce event-ambassadorship. Event-ambassadorship is when a consumer goes above and beyond in participating, attending, and engaging others in an event for personal reasons. This is best when organic or out of personal zeal.

**METHODS**

**Rationale for Choosing the Prom as Event Context**

Although this is not a study on the prom, characteristics of the event are important to establish. Characteristics may be in part generalizable to other scheduled events for young people (e.g., school dances, church ceremonial events, first date, school-sponsored events). Like other school-sponsored events, the prom is an event entailing a before-and-after ritual and tradition, gift exchange, as well as abundant distinctive dress, decoration, dancing, leisure, familial or teacher involvement, school support, and community. Like, Valentine’s Day, where consumers traditionally foremost recognize romantic relationships, there is a romantic potential that associates with the prom. Compared to other school-sponsored events, prom is a ritualistic exit from high school and the last celebration prior to graduation. This event is a tradition, which has evolved into a day of exchanges that may be resisted or embraced.

**Depth-Interviews and Samples**

The interviewers created an interview guide consisting of approximately twenty questions. The first set of questions were broadly about their high school experience in general,
and other sections covered their peer groups, the prom itself, and any of their influencers as to prom attitudes/behaviors. The authors considered group identification in relation to evangelical and resistant practices.

The authors sample young women for many reasons. One, while young men also attend and spend money on prom, young women are more susceptible to peer-pressure (the focus here). By some accounts, the prom is a gendered (female) event. “The popular construction of the prom as a moment in which to re-invent the self is a gendered one; this narrative is almost always told through the voice of a girl and the transformation that occurs is mapped fundamentally through her body. This is because the prom belongs to “the feminine.” The prom is a feminine space, conventionally thought to be the domain of girls” (Best 2000, p. 35). Peer discussion and institutional practice maintain the feminine space. Girls are “central players in the production and organization of both the actual prom and the systems of meaning through which the prom comes into being,” (ibid, p. 93). Ultimately, proms may be characterized as a practice ritual for a wedding. The focus on one gender here generates greater depth and insight.

Thus, to explore how event-resistance reflects susceptibility to peer-pressure in the prom context, the authors established the attitudes and behavior associated with prom (non) attendance and the social implications thereof via depth interviews.

The authors sampled via the subject pool at a major research university situated in central U.S. Young women are an appropriate sample as prom is a feminine event and one where peer-pressure (e.g., to look beautiful, to be invited to the pre- and post-prom events, to have sex, drink, disobey curfew) is especially profound. The authors went under protocol for human subjects approval, and upon consent, recorded the interviews. The authors interviewed twenty-six young women (18–22 years) about their prom experiences. The women were selected from the university’s subject pool, where the student earns extra credit in a course. The authors interviewed on the hour, each hour, for three days. The authors partially transcribed the interviews. Together, the researchers classified each informant into the proposed prom typology based on the emergent themes.

**Theme Development**

Together, the researchers classified each informant into the proposed prom typology based on the emergent themes. The authors iteratively analyzed the interview data via the lens of SIT. Via axial, open, and selective coding, the authors grouped similar findings and observations into categories of meaning as they relate to resistance. Such grouping helps reveal emergent patterns of each category (Wolcott 1990). In the process, new themes became apparent. The authors reviewed each other’s data interpretations until key themes reached a point of saturation.

To increase validity and reliability, suggested approaches (Spiggle 1994) were used. The data is triangulated in many ways. For instance, the authors considered multiple theoretical perspectives (e.g., psychology, sociology). The authors bracketed introspective notes to have an emic and etic approach. An author followed up with some informants for face validity of the themes.

**RESULTS: A TYPOLgy OF (PROM) EVENT EXPERIENCES**

The resulting framework is a typology, grounded in SIT, of event experiences among young women (see Figure 1). The resulting four categories are: enforced resisters, emotional resisters, low-level resisters, and event ambassadors.

The authors make a few points about the typology. First, as in a true typology, individuals are primarily in one of the groups. It is clear when a young woman is a resistor or an ambassador. Among the three resistant types, there is some overlap. Some resistant young women exhibit traits or with other resistant groups. Second, these group placements are not permanent. That is, at given points of their life, or with different events, one may be in different categories. For example, some informants discuss their first experience attending the prom as a sophomore as exciting, intriguing, and exhibit acts and behaviors consistent with that of an event ambassador. Yet, once the senior prom comes around, there may be more ambivalence consistent with a low-level resistor.

Again, prom is a context here; yet, one may plausibly apply the typology for other recurring/emotionally-charged life events (e.g., reunions). While these may be generalizable to some other events, here, the authors discuss the typology in the context of female experiences of prom events.

**Enforced Resistance: (Attitude High/Behavior Low)**

Those young women in the enforced resistance group exhibit low behavior with prom events; yet, interestingly they have high positive attitudes about the prom events.
Their behavior and social identity with their peers is limited by an enforcing party. Most commonly, enforcers are their parents or school administrators who attempt to manage student behavior. This external enforcement does not translate to negative attitudes about the prom events. But it certainly is seen as behavioral resistance because these young women do not attend the prom or aspects of it. These when women are very happy and eager to become involved, but their parents or school policy enforces restrictions. Parents of enforced resistors either do not let their daughters attend prom or engage in certain rituals (e.g., picture parties, spa days, non school sponsored after parties, dinners).

**Parental Enforcers.** Parents, and rightly so, have a vested interest in keeping their daughters safe and in an environment to protect her from unwanted peer-pressure (e.g., to underage drink or have sex). Parents (i.e., enforcers) may rely on their own prom experiences, or on media portrayals to form negative perceptions about the events. Movies and television, some informants note, portray prom as a wild, expensive, dramatic event where underage drinking, partying, drama and losing one’s virginity are norms. Some parents forbid prom or after-party attendance:

*My sophomore year I was asked by a senior to the prom – but my parents wouldn’t let me go . . . My parents didn’t let me go to my junior prom either. I helped to organize it but I couldn’t go. I was in the middle of everything and unable to go. I couldn’t speak to my friends for three weeks. You can say you don’t care – but you do care. I went my senior year . . . but my parents did not allow attendance at the after party.* (Sara, Enforced Resistor; Enforcer: Her Parents.)

**School Enforcers.** While enforcers are parents, school policy represents another main enforcer. Surprisingly, the main resistance point to school policy is the “lock in” policy that many schools have begun. In this policy, the school enforces a strict rule that the students sleep at the school-sponsored post-party overnight. The reason is to

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**FIGURE 1**

**A Typology of Female Event Resistant and Ambassador Experiences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIGH</td>
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<tr>
<td>LOW</td>
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**Behavior**

**HIGH**
- Competitive
- Status driven
- Can be perceived as "inferior" by other groups

**LOW**
- Culturally constrained
- Religious
- High parental control
- Limited access to event

**Event Ambassador**

**Emotional Resistor**
- Self esteem other low
- Awkward
- Often display subversive behaviours

**Enforced Resistor**

**Low Level Resistor**
- Disengage with tradition
- Susceptible to neutral peer pressure

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enforce rules that the teens do not underage drink, drive, have sex, or feel pressured to do so. While the school intent seems altruistic and risk-preventative, the authors find this policy often backfires. Many enforced resistors experienced such a “lock in” that stemmed resistance. This young woman was locked in her school gym after prom for a school sponsored/parental involved after-party:

_The prom was in our school gym. We weren’t allowed to get limos because they thought that would promote drinking on school property. When you got to prom it was a lock in. When you got there you couldn’t leave when you wanted to!_ (Joni, Enforced Resistor; Enforcer: Her School Policy).

While Joni really wanted to go home after her junior prom, the school policy would not let her leave. Because of her bad experience being stuck all night unwillingly, the following year, she skipped the school after-party. Instead, she and her peer group partied at a lake-house (so they could avoid school enforcement).

In sum, the external enforcers most often parents or school officials enforcing a well-meaning policy. Both enforcers have intents to protect young women from unwanted peer-pressure or illegal behaviors (e.g., underage drinking, illegal drug use, drinking and driving). Sadly, young women who are attitudinally for the prom seem to interpret these enforcements as unfair, limiting to their experience, or unreasonable.

**Emotional Resistance (Behavior High/Attitude Low)**

While the enforced resistors had external enforcers driving their behavioral resistance, the reverse condition is internal. That is, the young woman herself partakes in the event and its rituals (i.e., high on behavior) yet, has a low attitude about the prom. This has little to do with her parents or school policy. These women maintain a low attitude about prom and related events; yet, they participate anyway. Like the previous group, emotional resistors seem not to have a tight, defined social identity with their peers.

With this type of resistance, these young women have emotional turmoil that impacts their negative attitude towards prom. This intertwines with group exclusion (e.g., not included in the limo), insecurities/self-esteem issues (e.g., not popular or pretty enough), or date issues (e.g., boyfriend break-ups before prom). A defining characteristic of emotional resistance (versus enforced resistance) is that often, the emotional issues come from internal insecurities. In these cases, it is not the parents or teachers limiting their desired experience but the emotional state of the female/s that limits their involvement.

It appears these young girls are most highly susceptible to negative peer-pressure. For instance, emotional resistors are more inclined to misbehave to cope with the embarrassment or awkwardness felt when attending the prom or related activities (e.g., photos, limos, dinner, and after-parties). Others just do not care and bring a negative attitude to the senior prom:

_Drinking was a big part of our senior year. Obviously it was illegal but it goes on so [if I were to change anything] I would probably not take so many shots beforehand so I could remember the night better . . . We had iced-tea for dinner and poured half of it out and filled the glasses back up with whisky. It was so gross but we took what we can get at that age!“_ (Petra, Emotional Resistor).

Interestingly, this group seems to be looked down upon by the other groups because they cause drama. The enforced resistors especially do not like the emotional resistors, because the enforced resistors have external restrictions that prohibit them from fully engaging in the prom. Meanwhile, the emotional resistors are the ones setting a bad example that form the negative media portrayals, parental and administrator concern, and policy. As an enforced resistor notes without sympathy:

_This one girl got hammered in the limo – because when she got out she was stumbling about. She had a bit of a reputation – it wasn’t the first time she had done something like that and so she started falling and her date got angry – and they [principal and a cop] took him over to the side [before they got into the prom]. I assume they called her parents._ (Janine, Enforced Resistor Describing an Emotional Resistor).

Notably, it was rare for these females to admit they let boys or friendship groups create problems. It takes some retrospective maturity to admit that what appeared to be major issues were in essence, minor in the wider context. One informant, who is a current senior in college, now realizes that her expectations of the prom, her date, as well as her peers caused excess emotional turmoil:

_We did junior and senior year proms. I had boy drama both years . . . When I was a junior in high school, we were moving towards dating. He had gone to Sadie Hawkins and Prom together with another girl. I didn’t know what was going on. I felt really shafted. I went with a guy friend. When it came around time for [senior] prom, there was a guy who_
told one of my friends that he was going to ask me. I didn’t get to go with my group of friends. Being a senior, I wanted to be with my friends for that special memory . . . Our school was so materialistic that there were about 100 queen bees. There are some beautiful, well-put together people who invest a lot of time with social stuff. Walking in, I felt intimidated (Annie, Emotional Resistor).

In sum, this group displays persuasive emotionally-based resistance. The number of cases in this group is significantly less than in the others (which have a relatively even distribution). Yet, their identity and emotional underpinnings seem to make these young women the most susceptible to peer-pressure. The intensity of emotional resisters’ attitudes and behaviors is quite high – especially when compared to the final resistance-based group of low-level resistors.

Low-Level Resistance (Behavior Low/Attitude Low)

These group members do not fully engage with the practices (e.g., photos, corsage exchange). These members are reasonably prom resistant but go to please peers (SIT compliant) and parents (moms). A negative attitude and associative behaviors characterize low-level resistance towards the prom. Here, resistant practices correlate with neutral susceptibility to peer and familial pressure, media portrayal of this event as well as cultural expectations and space.

Feelings of obligation towards cliques mean that low-level resistors, despite significant reservations, will avoid non-attendance of this ritual event and subsequent change of social positioning or exclusion from their friendship groups:

I kind of participated [in the prom] because I knew it was important to my friends. I mean I would stand in pictures – but I was by no means asking, “Someone come take my picture!” ... I didn’t bring a camera – it was being supportive to them (Barbara, Low-Level Resistor).

Similarly, girls recognize the importance of the high-school prom for their families, and the implications (non)attendance has for social status (see Castilhos and Rossi 2008). Maintaining tradition (macro), facilitating symbolic consumption (micro), and ensuring well-being are reasons the attendees give for maternal involvement. Mothers want their daughters to attend this event but they also recognize the consequences of alcohol-fuelled after parties, employing strategies to mediate behavior where opportunities arise:

One of the ONLY reasons we went to prom was that they were auctioning off books and iPods and there were $2,008 checks – 10 of them [that could be won]. They tried to raise so much money so that people would go to prom, (Katherine, Low-Level Resistor).

Low-level resistance does not always lead to deviant or anti-social behavior (e.g., drinking alcohol) but does involve the rejection of traditional elements of this ritual (e.g., taking a date, corsage exchange). Movies and TV shows regularly depict aspects of the high-school prom that add to the “pageantry,” “tackiness” and subsequent rejection of the prom ideology. Expectations of the high-school prom increase through media portrayals of this event; often ending in disappointment and reinforcing negative attitudes:

I wasn’t too thrilled about prom because I never really liked dances. There were a lot of builds up – there would be so much working up to it and I would always be disappointed. I wanted someone to ask me but I ended up going with my girlfriends, (Carolyn, Low-Level Resistor).

Going with other girlfriends may strengthen their social identity with likeminded peers (i.e., other girls who were not asked or prefer not to have a date). The number of events the low-level resistors attend also appears to change the significance and subsequent expectations of the prom. Although the high-school prom is historically the signature event of the final school year, recently this ritual has become ‘just one more’ event for adolescents to attend and perform culturally embedded roles. Event dilution (similar to brand dilution: see Lau and Phau 2007) occurs when too many rituals or events, with little or no differentiation, require the attendance of a particular group. Rejection of the number of events as well as the event itself enables an understanding and explanation of low-level prom resistance:

We had banquets every year [drill team] and that was enough for me. I just did not want to go to the prom – there were just so many people [going to prom]. Prom was something I didn’t feel I had to go to if I was already having something with my friends, (Claire, Low-Level Resistor).

Interestingly, are quite distinct from the other resistant groups. Low-level resistors seem really not to care too
much about the prom, see it as just another Saturday, and are certainly not emotionally-invested. They do not report issues with their parents’ or school policy enforcement. Low-level resistors are the most distinct from the final group of event ambassadors—young women who embrace the prom and its grandeur. Unknown to the eager ambassadors, the low-level resistors consider themselves as superior to event ambassadors whom the resistors describe as “embarrassing” and “over-the-top.”

**Event Ambassador (Behavior High/Attitude High)**

The final group members are not resistant in the least. They are **high on both attitude and behavior**. These young women eagerly prepare and await for prom, see it as the ultimate event, and are involved in many aspects of event planning, rituals, and communicating about the prom offline and online. These group members often attend proms more than once, serve on the prom committee, and promote the event via WOM and eWOM. Event ambassadors are cognizant of the social status that coincides with organizing and engaging with events. These ambassadors are serial prom attendees, and often seek to be invited to proms as early as their freshman or sophomore year.

They are competitive, although eager to depict unity or “togetherness.” They describe themselves as “independent,” envisage the prom as an opportunity to act in the interest of a self identity project and are less likely to conform to either neutral or anti-social peer-pressure. Invariably these individuals are at the center of organizing prom, appropriating the practices and meanings for this ritual (see Tinson and Nuttall 2010). While the input of others is a consideration, the management of the event for ambassadors relates to building social capital:

> You have to be chosen to be on the organizing committee so that is like a status thing . . . and I think people would definitely want to talk to us a lot about prom. Because we had such a small class we could listen to everybody. Everyone knew that the four of us were really good organizers and planners and they were happy we were doing it – that it would get done and it would be good. (Cassondra, Event Ambassador).

These attendees are desirous of tradition, describing the prom as an “initiation”; an event that “is such a big deal . . . it’s one of the things you have to do.” The need for others to attend and engage with this ritual relates to the condition of an audience. Without the soft core or periphery members of a subculture, there can be no hard core or event ambassadors (see Schouten and McAlexander 1995). An activity, such as making t-shirts, emphasizes social identity, status and opinion leadership for ambassadors. Low-level resistors are perceived as inferior group by event ambassadors as they jeopardize the success of the prom and its cool factor:

> We made prom shirts. It is a big deal. Our school has a prom t-shirt review committee. It has to get approved and everyone wears it the day before prom. We wore them to school the day before, the Friday. I remember seeing people not wearing the shirt and it is like, are you not going? – how weird, (Meghan, Event Ambassador).

The prom appeals to the competitiveness of ambassadors as tradition dictates a ‘winner’ in the form of a prom queen. These types of attendees follow convention as it strengthens their social identity with likeminded peers (i.e., other event ambassadors). They note that recent changes to the voting process benefit those willing to pursue the prom crown. Rather than a passive approach to the award, e.g., the obvious success of the most popular or the prettiest girl, opportunities that appeal to the work ethic and competitive ambition of the event ambassador are within reach:

> It doesn’t necessarily mean that you have to be like the cheerleader or the football captain to win . . . prom queen and king are the ones who raise the most money [for charity], (Carrie, Event Ambassador).

Here the emphasis is on the individual rather than the collective. The fundraising is of less importance for the event ambassador than the potential outcome. This reinforces the social and long-term identity positioning the prom affords. Notions of unity or “togetherness” also relate to status and consequently the perceptions of others (see Elsbach and Bhattacharya 2001):

> It’s like the paparazzi now – everyone is like, “take a picture of me” – it’s like how many people can you get a picture with. The other thing was “Oh I got a picture taken with whoever and she’s in that clique – let’s get it on Facebook” – that’s definitely running rampant right now, (Sue, Event Ambassador).

The rational or strategic approach the event ambassadors adopt involves the dismissal of emotional resistors also as an inferior group. Ambassadors anticipate the disappoint-
ment of emotional resisters who “believe the hype.” Event ambassadors are image conscious and enjoy “getting dolled up,” but they bound their expectations of the prom in realism. For ambassadors, prom is a social opportunity for the individual to grasp:

*I think all the people who didn’t want to go actually went – they had a great time. But you have to let yourself have a good time. Don’t go and stand by the wall,* (Donna, Event Ambassador).

**CONCLUSION**

Social Identity Theory suggests that group behavior is significant, and literature on adolescent behavior shows the relevance of peer-pressure. Through this theoretical lens, the authors provide a typology of event experiences. In sum, there are four main types of female adolescents in relation to their attitudes and behaviors towards prom – their coming of age event. Enforced resisters have a high attitude and low behavior. Often, they face cultural, parental, or financial barriers to them engaging in part or all prom events. They have limited access to the event. Emotional resisters often display subversive behaviors and are more susceptible to negative peer pressure; their behaviors may intertwine with low self-esteem, awkwardness, and drama. Low-level resisters disengage with tradition. They are, however, susceptible to neutral peer-pressure. Event Ambassadors, the final group, exhibit high attitudes and behavior. They tend to embrace the prom, and related events and rituals. This group tends to be more status driven and competitive. Interestingly, resisters can perceive ambassadors as inferior. In part, this may be due to how these group members tend to embrace school and school-sponsored activities.

**Social Identity Theory: Implications**

For scholars, the typology brings implications to SIT. Few SIT studies have focused on special events, and how they may shape or reinforce a young person’s identity with peers. The findings illustrate that events, such as the prom, can intensify social groupings, increase rivalries and emphasize differences. Because of the findings here, there are opportunities to address this. This includes, for example, improving inclusion as it relates to prom, sharing responsibilities and reflecting on policies to reduce misbehavior. Equally being part of a group can effect behavior change. In this case, neutral peer-pressure is more significant than negative peer pressure for low-level resisters who “give in” and attend prom. Low-level resisters, however, devalue what is important to the event ambassa-

dors to manage their potential “out group” position (Mummendey, Kessler, Klink, and Mielke 1999).

Negative peer influence is evident for emotional resisters. This peer context is especially significant during adolescence with self-appraisal formed as a reflection of the responses and evaluations of others (see Hergovich, Sirsch, and Felinger 2002). Through understanding different types of and susceptibility to peer pressure, adults can apply this typology in other situations to mediate (mis) behavior.

Interestingly, event ambassadors compare to the football fans that never attend a game. Ambassadors would appear to have less of a need to be part of a social group. They show less concern for the warmness of their peers and more concern for their own social capital. There is evidence here of active attempts to make sense of and change the social environment (see Brown 2000) with a number of strategies in use to gain status (see Mummendey et al. 1999).

**Implication for Businesses – A Prom Expo with a Social Component**

The typology may be used and appreciated by school officials and parents to help understand students and their children in respect of an event that is often associated with peer-pressure. Meanwhile, relevant businesses can use it to understand the importance of social identity with peers along with where any resistance stems from (internally in all cases except the enforced resisters).

For businesses who are in prom-related industries (e.g., formal wear and accessories, floral, food and beverage, limos, event venues, photographers, etc.) it is important to first recognize that not all who go to prom have positive attitudes or behaviors regarding it. That is, for some, the prom raises conflict with parents or school policy. Or, an unsolidified social identity with their peers may bring emotional resistance.

Findings suggest that young women spent a great deal of stress, time and money searching and buying dinner, limo, dresses, jewelry, and flowers that fits their identity and budget. To lessen resistance, the authors recommend a community prom fair event – a Prom Expo. This free, open to the public event, will help young consumers in each group (and their potentially-enforcing parents) to learn more about the businesses catering to prom and to budget their prom-related expenses. For the businesses, the Prom Expo may enhance their brand awareness and sales. At this event, the Expo may also demonstrate social
responsibility by encouraging donations of gently used prom dresses and formal wear. The expo could collaborate with local dry-cleaners to donate the items to local high schools in poorer communities or to alleviate some of the resistance from parents’ financial pressures.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The authors present this typology, from the context of a coming of age event—the prom. While one limitation of the current study is that the authors focus on one event context, the authors encourage scholars to implement the typology in related settings (e.g., high-school reunions, college reunions, holiday or religious celebrations, weddings, and other special events). These three resistance types and the one ambassador type may apply to these other contexts. A second limitation is that the findings concentrate on attitudinal resistance. It may be useful to explore behavioral resistance in the context of social group identification. A last suggestion for extending the findings is to explore the event-ambassador type from a school policy perspective. It is becoming more common for event-ambassadors to be paid promoters—on campus or otherwise. Further research may focus on this type of promotion as to its role in peer pressure on campus and ethical concerns therein.

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UNDERSTANDING ANTECEDENTS TO OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY AMONG CHILDREN

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SUMMARY

Research suggests that competitive school food sales, such as à la carte lunch lines or vending machine snacks and sodas, significantly predict an obese body mass index (BMI) among students (Anderson and Butcher 2006; Dority, McGarvey, and Kennedy 2010). On the other hand, the U.S. Institute of Medicine (IOM) suggests many factors lead to child obesity including taste predispositions, parent food intake, household food availability, family meals, culture, food production and distribution systems, and/or government regulation (IOM 2006). Such research often begins by asking how consumers learn about food preparation, rituals and traditions, a process that has been referred to as parental socialization. Specifically, parental socialization is an “adult-initiated process by which developing children, through insight, training, and imitation, acquire the habits and values congruent with adaptation to their culture” (Baumrind 1980, p. 640).

To the authors’ knowledge no study has linked parental socialization to child’s BMI. The present study attempts to fill literary gaps by predicting child BMI, i.e., overweight and obesity, by empirically accounting for three potential sets of antecedents: (1) child’s exposure to youth-targeted food and drink advertising, (2) individual characteristics of the child and parent, and (3) parental socialization factors of permissiveness and restriction. The present study contributes to marketing and public policy literature by providing insights about many hypothesized, but rarely tested, relationships between socialization agents and child weight.

Little resolution is provided in the extant literature for the debate about the relationship between marketing and obesity. What researchers do know is that television viewing, sedentary activity, and competitive food sales within schools help to explain child weight. Researchers also know, however, that parental limits on child television viewing do not contribute to this explanation and neither viewing time nor exposure to food advertising among children has changed across time since significant changes in child obesity have been observed. Beyond marketing influences, child consumption research also points to individual and parental style characteristics.

The two most prevalent individual variables known to significantly influence child weight are sex and physical activity of the child. Empirical evidence indicates boys are more susceptible to childhood obesity than girls for several age groups (Ogden et al. 2007). In addition, heredity and physical inactivity are found to predict obesity trends among girls more precisely than among boys. Moreover, epidemiological studies, especially those involving twins and adoptees, find child obesity to be largely inherited (e.g., Birch and Davidson 2001).

Elements characteristic of the family environment also offer the potential to explain weight levels in children. Videon and Manning (2003) find a positive relationship between the frequency of meals eaten together as a family and healthy child food consumption. Birch and Davison (2001) suggest older children’s eating habits are largely influenced by family tradition and/or eating policies while those of younger children are more impacted by internal cues. Other characteristics studied include work schedules and household activities.

While a longer literature review would provide a link between parental mediation of marketing and child obesity, this antecedent should be considered separate from parental socialization. Whereas mediation is momentary and specific, parental socialization is considered a lifelong “rearing” process with parent child communication patterns continuing into adulthood (Chaffee, McLeod, and Atkin 1971), creating a larger and longer-lasting impact on child behavior (Moschis 1985) than parental mediation.

Research linking parental socialization and child weight does not exist as of yet, but ties between these processes and child consumption has been indicated in some studies. Among others, Carlson and Grossbart (1988) focus on the parental outcomes of consumption autonomy and consumption restriction by surveying mothers of kindergarteners through sixth grade children. Although these authors find no differences in the likelihood to grant consumption autonomy to children across differing parental styles, they do find two important socialization trends. First, an inverse relationship is found between restrictive parenting and offering children freedom to consume as desired. Second,
an orientation towards adult control is found among specific types of parents. Authoritatives, a parenting style identified by Carlson and Grossbart (1988) and described as strong proponents of strict discipline, are evidenced to mediate the effects of media exposure and to coview advertising with their children more than parents operating under different styles.

Because child obesity is approached in academic research as a complex concern, it is likely to involve complex interrelationships between various factors (e.g., Fisch, Bilek, and Ulstrom 1975). Is marketing activity one of these factors and, if so, is its influence on child weight greater in comparison to individual characteristics? In an attempt to answer these research questions and others, this study utilizes a survey that collected information from individual seventh and tenth grade students, parents, and school administrators to assess school food policies as well as social ramifications of adolescent food consumption in general, resulting in a merged dataset representing 332 completed student-parent surveys. First, an exploratory analysis was conducted that identified the three socialization agents of Child Exposure to Targeted Advertising (16 items, Chronbach alpha of .81), Permissive Parental Socialization (11, .67), and Restrictive Parental Socialization (16, .84). Next, a hierarchical regression was conducted to test the efficacy of these agents, as well as non-socialization agents, as independent variables for predicting the BMIs of children who are overweight (BMI 85th percentile) or obese (BMI 95th percentile). Because understanding the weight influencers of normal weight children is irrelevant to the objective and potential contribution of the present study, a smaller sample of 35 (11%) and 41 (13%) parent-student response sets indicating overweight and obese children only, respectively, was utilized for this analysis.

Results reveal the latent theme of parents reporting and assessing food and drink advertising in their child’s school (i.e., marketing activity) identified in the exploratory analysis, Model 1, is a nonsignificant predictor (p > .05). Next a predictive model including both marketing and individual characteristics is assessed. Model 2 is also a nonsignificant predictor (p > .05) of overweight and obesity among children. The third and fourth blocks entered represent the influence of the parent. When the third block is entered, permissive parental socialization, Model 3 becomes significant (p < .05). In fact, this variable alone is, and remains, significantly positive even in Model 4 when restrictive parental socialization is added to the other nonsignificant (p > .05) predictors of marketing and individual characteristics. The positive relationship between permissive parental socialization and the BMI dependent variable suggests the more permissive a parent orients him/herself towards his/her child, the greater the likelihood the child will become overweight or obese. Restrictive parental socialization, the fourth block entered, is a nonsignificant (p > .05) predictor and also causes this final full model to become nonsignificant (p > .05). The regression models’ explained variance is -.4 percent, negative because the single input is considered the constant (Model 1); 13 percent (Model 2); 19 percent (Model 3); and 18 percent (Model 4).

Implications arising from this study include suggestions that government and advocacy group healthful food communications should emphasize the potential harmful effects of permissive parenting rather than beneficial effects of restrictive parenting. Parental perspectives of the influence of marketing do not, in reality (at least in our study) contribute to predicting overweight and obese children’s BMI, making assumptions about the impact of marketing on children’s attainment of overweight and obesity, while popular among marketing’s detractors, may not be supportable in truth though additional study is certainly needed to verify such suppositions. Thus, from a public policy perspective, interventions into addressing overweight and obesity in children might be better targeted at helping parents maintain healthy lifestyles in children rather than attempting to regulate further the influence of marketing on children. References are available upon request.

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A MID-TERM EVALUATION OF A NUTRITION SYMBOL ON SHELF TAGS

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SUMMARY

In October 2011, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) recommended that the FDA and the USDA develop, test, and implement a single standard Front-of-Package nutrition system to appear on all food and beverage products (IOM 2011). Specifically, the IOM recommends a type of summary symbol in which a score, from 0 to 3, denotes the healthiness of a product, based on its saturated fat, trans fat, sodium, and added sugars contents per serving.

During the past several years, food manufacturers in the United States (U.S.) have begun to put on the principal display panel (PDP) of food packages more information about the nutritional or health attributes of their products. This information is provided in various formats of graphic symbols or icons and in addition to the textual statements that are already on the PDP, such as “Low Fat.” Some of the symbols that were introduced since 2004 include General Mills’ Goodness Corner, Kellogg’s Nutrition at a Glance, and Kraft’s Sensible Solution (IOM 2010).

Meanwhile, some grocery chains in the U.S. have also begun providing their customers point-of-sale guidance for healthier product choices. For example, since September 2006, the Hannaford supermarket chain has been using the Guiding Stars (GS) shelf tag program that rates the healthfulness of products from 0 to 3 stars. A shelf tag shows how many stars a product earns, the name of the program “Guiding Stars,” and a tag line “Nutritious shopping made simple.” The GS uses a patented algorithm to score a product’s nutritional characteristics based on current dietary guidelines (Fischer 2011). The better nutritional value a product has the more stars it receives. If a product receives no star, then it did not meet the criteria to earn a star. In the store, however, a product can also be without a star because it has not been rated by the program.

Sutherland et al. (2010) examined the effect of the GS program on sales units of ready-to-eat (RTE) cereal products, in the same four-week period (ending October 31) in 2006, 2007, and 2008. They found the proportion of units sold increased more among products without stars (7.72%) than products with stars (4.42%) between October 2006 and October 2007. But the reverse was observed between October 2007 and October 2008, when the increase was larger among products with stars (6.47%) than among products without stars (5.51%). The study did not examine how prices and other factors may have influenced the observed differences.

In this study, we expanded Sutherland et al. to include factors that may affect purchase patterns observed in Hannaford stores; i.e., price, promotions, and interactions between Hannaford and its competitors in the same trading area. We hypothesized that the program would help shift purchases in Hannaford stores from less healthy products to more healthy products because the program has both informational and promotional utilities. The program makes products’ nutritional characteristics prominent on shelf tags and provides overall ratings of products’ nutritional characteristics rather than detailed nutrition information. The numerical ratings provide easy-to-use heuristics about the healthfulness of grocery products (Petty and Cacioppo 1986), when low involvement is more likely to occur (Bell and Marshall 2003). Thus, the program should help reduce customers’ search costs, in time, nutrition knowledge and numerical skills, especially for those who seek out more nutritional products and those who cannot afford to spend more time selecting products at the store. On the other hand, because few of Hannaford’s competitors in its trading area had similar point-of-purchase programs, the GS could have created competitive advantage by attracting customers from other retailers. Due to lack of necessary data, the study could not have accounted for the effects of PDP information on purchases. Nevertheless, since the PDP information was provided by national brands, which were available in Hannaford’s and competitors’ stores, we suspected its confounding effects on the GS program were negligible.

Methodology and Data

The Rotterdam demand system (Barten 1968; Theil 1980) was used in this study. The original Rotterdam demand system was developed to study the relationship between product purchase and prices and income. In this study we
examined the impacts of the GS program and temporary price reduction (TPR) on the sales of RTE cereals. In order to examine the impacts of these non-price and non-income variables, the original Rotterdam demand system was modified by incorporating the Tintner-Ichumura-Basmann condition (Brown and Lee 1993, 2002; Duffy 1987, 1989; Theil 1980). Specifically, the empirical model is

\[ w \ln q_i = c_i + \mu_i \Delta Q + \sum_{j=1}^{8} \pi_{ij} (\ln p_j - \sum_k \gamma_k d_{aj_k}) + \mu_i DQ \delta \sum_{j=1}^{8} \pi_{ij} (\ln p_j - \sum_k \gamma_k d_{aj_k}) + \mu_i DQ \delta, \quad i = 1, 2, \ldots, 8. \]  

(1)

Subscripts i and j denote eight categories of cereals, four for Hannaford’s 0 (including unrated), 1, 2, and 3-star products and four for corresponding products purchased in competitors’ stores. The first differences of logarithms of prices (\( \ln p_j \)), units sold per stock-keeping Unit (SKU) (\( \ln q_i \)), and promotional activities (\( \Delta q_i \)) were used in the estimation of the demand parameters \( \mu_i \) (marginal propensity to consume), \( \pi_{ij} \) (the Slutsky coefficient), and \( \gamma_k \) (the impact of promotion on the marginal of utility). We assumed the GS impacts are gradual and added an intercept, \( c_i \), to capture this gradual change or time trend; i.e., if GS had a positive impact on the demand for cereal \( i \) over the study period, \( c_i \) would be positive.

We examined 24 sets of monthly RTE cereal purchase data, at both Hannaford and its competitors in the same trading areas, for the period of April 2008 – April 2010, or about 1.5–3.5 years after the introduction of the GS. Nielsen’s Scantrack data were the source of sales, price, and promotion data for Hannaford and its competitors in the same trading area. GS ratings were obtained from Guiding Stars Licensing Company. The promotional variables were measured in terms of percent of dollar sales on promotion; i.e., dollar sales on a promotional activity divided by the total dollar sales. During the study period, the competing stores in Hannaford’s trading area did not use the GS program. Therefore, sales in these stores can be used as a base (or control) to examine whether GS in Hannaford supermarkets had impacts on the purchases of RTE cereals that had more stars than those with fewer stars. However, the prices and the intensity of promotional activities in Hannaford and its competing stores exhibited different patterns. A direct comparison of the sales in Hannaford and its competitors would not provide reliable information about the impact of GS on the purchases of cereals with different star ratings, unless prices and promotions are incorporated in the analysis.

Over the study period, the number of SKUs for each GS category had changed, with an increase in the number of SKUs for products with stars. The number of SKUs for 1- and 2-star rated cereals increased, the number of SKUs for none-rated cereals decreased slightly, and the number of SKUs for 3-star rated cereals remained relatively steady. In order to incorporate the changes in numbers of SKUs into the analysis, we used two approaches: by dividing unit sales by the number of SKUs in each category using the model as shown in (1), or by including the numbers of SKUs for each GS star-rated category as explanatory variables.

\[ w \ln q_i = c_i + \mu_i \Delta Q + \sum_{j=1}^{8} \pi_{ij} (\ln p_j - \sum_k \gamma_k d_{aj_k}) + \mu_i DQ \delta, \quad i = 1, 2, \ldots, 8. \]  

(2)

Unlike Sutherland et al. (2010), this study focused on GS’s possible effects on purchases after the program had been implemented for 18 months. Thus, we considered this evaluation as a mid-term evaluation of the program’s effects.

### Preliminary Findings and Discussion

Preliminary results of this study suggest that the Guiding Stars program had negligible impact on the purchase for starred RTE cereals in Hannaford stores 1.5–2.5 years after the initiation of the program. This observation is different from that reported by Sutherland et al. (2010), i.e., the GS program had increased the purchases of starred cereals more than that of cereals without stars between October 2007 and October 2008. There are at least two reasons for the different findings between the current study and their study. That study used purchase data for three four-week periods in 2006, 2007, and 2008 while the current study used data for a 24-month period from 2008 through 2010. It is possible that the program had positive impacts when it was first implemented but the impacts wore off after the first two years as customers became less interested in or paid less attention to the shelf tag information. It is also possible that those who were interested in buying starred products had already done so and thus the positive impacts had peaked before mid-2008.

The second possible reason is that different approaches were used in the two studies. The Sutherland et al. study did not account for prices, promotion, or competition. In contrast, we considered prices, promotional tactics, and competition between Hannaford and other stores in the same trading area as factors to explain changes in unit purchases in Hannaford stores. Furthermore, we used an econometric model to estimate the impacts of the GS program while we cannot tell whether their study used any modeling to derive their results. Unfortunately, with our data set (2008–2010), we were unable to analyze any
changes in purchase before and immediately after the 2006 implementation of the GS program.

This study found that retail promotional activities had positive impacts on the purchase of RTE cereals. Results suggest that the combination of feature ads and displays had the largest promotional impacts and temporary price reduction had the smallest promotional impact on purchases. Retail promotions often come with price reductions. Results of this study also suggest the four categories of cereals sold in Hannaford (0 or unrated, 1 star, 2 stars, and 3 stars) had close to unity price elasticity, an indication that a change in price would not affect total revenue significantly. Therefore, promotional activities can play an instrumental role in helping customers choose healthier food products. There is an incentive for manufacturers, retailers, or both to promote their products using feature ads and displays. Hence, for the purpose of promoting healthy food choices and reducing the prevalence of diet-related preventable illnesses and public health cost, it is useful to consider providing not only nutrition information at point-of-purchase but also increased visibility of healthier products.

Our study also has policy implications. The IOM has recommended research on a concept of nutrition symbol that shares at least two common features with the Guiding Stars. Both use numerical ratings (from 0 to 3) to convey the overall nutritional characteristics of products, though their rating algorithms are different. Neither provides aid on the interpretation and use of the symbol, though the GS does include a tag line “Nutritious shopping made simple.” While the IOM concept is meant for PDPs and not shelf tags, this study does raise some important research questions before the IOM concept can be adopted by policy makers. For example, how does this type of nutrition symbols work in comparison to other types of nutrition symbols that present nutrient-specific information? Would such a symbol have larger impacts if use instructions or explanation is provided next to the symbol? What can be done to sustain the impacts of a program, if any, over the long term?

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SIZING UP THE SIZE EFFECT: A META-ANALYSIS OF UNIT SIZE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON CONSUMPTION VOLUME

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SUMMARY

The effect of size on consumption seems well established (Chandon and Wansink 2011). The greater the serve, the greater the amount consumed (Wansink 1996). The effect of size on consumption has been the focus of recent government guidelines stating that the food industry is well placed to contribute to a national strategy to reduce obesity through the promotion of agreed nutrition and health messages into every home on food packages, the development of lower energy formulations, and the introduction of new packaging that encourages consumption resistance. Consequently, the repackaging of food into smaller sizes, such as 100 calorie, mini or bite sized servings, is a popular contemporary strategy among food marketers. There is a belief that the availability of smaller serves provides consumers with the power to resist the temptations of larger serves of snack food items.

However, despite the best efforts of both governments and contemporary social marketers in promoting and implementing strategies that reduce consumption volume, there is ambiguity as to the success of such initiatives. The growing body of academic research does not always confirm a serving-size effect which has important implications for the possible success of small size portions in promoting consumer resistance. Some empirical studies simply do not find the size effect (Raynor and Wing 2007) or at best find very weak effects (Rolls, Roe, Halverson, and Meengs 2007; Wansink, Payne, and Shimizu 2011). Other studies reveal an opposite effect; smaller serving sizes result in greater consumption for restrained eaters, the very individuals that social marketing efforts are supposed to benefit (Do Vale et al. 2008; Scott et al. 2008).

In light of social policy recommendations, and the resultant changes food and beverage manufacturers are implementing to package configurations and social policy, the disparate results between studies remains a cause for concern. The variation in effects implies that recent policy suggestions may not be achieving their intended results and might even be inadvertently encouraging overconsumption, instead of contributing meaningfully to consumer resistance efforts. In response to these concerns, the first aim of this paper is to use a meta-analytic framework to establish the size of the size-effect. Given the burgeoning literature exploring size effects and its resultant social policy implications, a synthesis and measure of the effect is important and timely. We then explore the role, if any, of various moderating factors play in influencing the relationship between (pack and serving) size and overconsumption.

Using 145 independent samples and a combined n of 8027, we are able to paint a clear picture of the role that size has on consumption volume and in doing so, are able to provide valuable insights into whether reductions in package and serving size are beneficial practices in response to the world’s growing obesity epidemic. References are available upon request.

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TASTES GREAT OR TASTY? MATCHING ADVERTISING LANGUAGE TO PRODUCT CONSTRUAL

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SUMMARY

Recently, a number of journal articles have examined the effects of construal on consumer behavior. Construal level has been shown to influence voting, self-control, saving, social influence, conservation and perceptions of complementarity or promotion value (Cheema and Patrick 2008; Ülkümen and Cheema 2011). Our research finds evidence that matching the construal level of advertising copy to that of the focal product can improve product attitudes by facilitating processing fluency, a finding that has significant implications for attitude and advertising research.

Construal level theory (CLT), has found evidence that, as abstraction increases, psychological distance increases and as psychological distance increases processing of abstract events is facilitated (Liberman and Trope 1998). This research has shown that desirability is more abstract than feasibility, idealistic values (respect, honesty, etc.) are more abstract than pragmatic and functional concerns (uses, extrinsic benefits) and hedonic products (music, chocolate) are also more abstract than utilitarian products (glue stick, ball point pen). CLT has also discovered that psychological distance can be affected by temporal, geographical and social distance in such a way that objects that are farther away on these dimensions are construed more abstractly. In other words, a computer that comes out in a year, or was made in Europe, or is owned by an out-group member is construed at a higher level than one that is coming out next week, made in the U.S. or owned by a close friend.

While social psychology has found differences in attitudes, perceptions, and behavior depending on the level of construal, psycholinguists have also studied the idea of abstract vs. concrete. Research on linguistic categories finds that words with the same semantic definitions can be grouped into different levels of abstractness. The Linguistic Category Model developed by Semin and Fiedler (1988) provides five categories of words that have different degrees of cognitive functions in interpersonal communications and vary in their level of abstraction. It is found that adjectives are generally governed by abstract, semantic relations rather than be governed by the contingencies of contextual factors; verbs, in contrast, are generally governed by concrete relations.

We apply these speech classifications to marketing messages in print ads and propose a construal-matching effect. We hypothesize that an effective match facilitates a fluency that results in increased persuasiveness of the matched messages. Using verbs (concrete) to advertise utilitarian (concrete) products (e.g., glue stick), due to matching, will make the message more effective. In the same vein, using adjectives (abstract) to advertise hedonic (abstract) products (e.g., music) will create positivity.

Study 1 examines the matching hypothesis by examining two different products with either matched or unmatched messages. Study 2 examines the matching hypothesis by priming the same product to be either hedonic or utilitarian. Finally, in study 3, to provide more evidence of the construal-matching hypothesis, we alter the release date of the iced coffee to be distal or proximal, manipulating a different dimension of psychological distance and still see the positive effects of construal-matching.

A pretest revealed a glue stick to be primarily utilitarian and an mp3 to be primarily hedonic. Therefore, these were taken as the two focal products in Study 1. Two versions of ads for each of the two products were developed for the experiment and pretested to be semantically equivalent. One version of the ads use concrete verb words, the other version of the ads use abstract adjective words. After reading the ads, subjects reported their brand attitude, message believability and desirability, cognitive involvement when reading the ad, and cognitive responses.

The results of Study 1 support the construal-matching hypotheses. Ads framed in concrete words were perceived to be more believable and persuasive when they were used to describe the utilitarian product. In contrasts, ads framed with abstract words were perceived to be more convincing and more effective when used to describe the hedonic product.

The initial pretest also revealed that iced coffee was considered to be a hybrid product consisting of hedonic and utilitarian attributes. Therefore, this product was used
in Study 2, subjects were primed to either view iced coffee as hedonic or utilitarian. Consistent with traditional methods of priming, subjects were given a word search in which they were either asked to find words that related to utility (function, aim, objective, function, etc.) or to hedonicity (love, enjoy, fun, pleasure, etc.). They were then shown an ad promoting a new iced coffee drink at a university café. This ad either used verbs to promote the product and café or adjective (e.g., tastes great vs. tasty).

Results from this study also support our construal-matching hypothesis. Those who viewed ads that matched their primed mindset had more positive attitudes towards the iced coffee, the café, and the advertisement itself.

Finally, to test the generalizability of our matching hypothesis, in a third study, we change the dimension of psychological distance that influences construal of our focal product. In study 3, we use the same iced coffee, but alter the opening day of the café to be either this coming fall or one year from now. Again, even using a different manipulation, we see the same construal-matching. Over all three studies, we see that using adjectives (verbs) to advertise abstract (concrete) products is the most effective.

This research adds to the stream of research examining the positive effects of matching. The mood match hypothesis and encoding specificity argue that recall is facilitated by ensuring that recall occurs in the same context as learning (Tulving 1973). Work in frame matching (Cheema and Patrick 2008) demonstrates that when message frames match an individual’s mindset, consumers are more likely to act in accordance with their attitude. Attitude research has found that when a message frame matches individuals’ self-schema, matching has a positive effect on attitudes (Grier and Deshpande 2001; Wheeler et al. 2005). Consistent with these positive matching effects, this research finds matching the construal level of advertisement language to product features creates positivity. Using adjectives (verbs) to advertise abstract (concrete) products leads to the most positive product attitudes. References are available upon request.

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THE INFLUENCE OF TASK DIFFICULTY ON PERCEIVED DURATION OF PRODUCT EFFICACY

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SUMMARY

As consumers, we often wonder how long products will last or, alternatively, how long before they “wear off.” How long will the morning brew give you energy? How long will the headache medicine relieve pain and keep the excruciating headache from coming back? Despite the pervasiveness of such questions and their importance in determining consumption – namely intake frequency – there has been no research on consumers’ judgments of product efficacy duration.

Extant research has shown that consumers’ expectations and judgments of product efficacy may be shaped by beliefs and extraneous factors such as the presence of side effects (Kramer et al. forthcoming), perceptual properties (Roullet and Droulers 2005), the products’ origin (e.g., Western or Eastern; Wang, Keh, and Bolton 2010), and price (Shiv, Carmon, and Ariely 2005). Indeed, it is well recognized that human cognition can be understood by viewing knowledge about biological, physical, and social processes as an organization of intuitive theories. While reliance on such abstract knowledge often results in proper inference-making, it may also lead to seeing connections that do not actually exist (Griffiths and Tenenbaum 2009).

In the present research, we take a neglected construct – perceived duration of product efficacy – and propose that contextual factors, namely the tasks consumers perform during and after product consumption, affect such judgments. Specifically, we demonstrate the consumer belief that duration of product efficacy depends on the difficulty level of the task one performs.

Importantly, evidence supports that this lay belief has no basis in scientific fact. There is no increased energy utilization during tasks that require more vs. less cognitive effort (Clarke and Sokoloff 1998; Gibson and Green 2002; Lennie 2003; Kurzban 2010). The efficacy duration of a product’s active ingredients (e.g., half life of medication, glucose metabolism) is determined by factors such as genetics and body weight; for the average, healthy individual who is not glucose depleted, no physical or cognitive task that he/she performs can change its kinetics. Despite the scientific evidence to the contrary, across four studies we demonstrate that consumers hold the belief that product efficacy duration is shorter (vs. longer) when they perform a difficult (vs. easy) task.

In Study 1, we obtain initial evidence that perceived duration of product efficacy – measured by actual consumption in real-time – depends on the difficulty of the task one performs. We administered a reading task and manipulated task difficulty by adjusting font style, using degraded font in the difficult condition. Participants were placed in either the difficult or easy task condition and given Jelly Belly Sport Beans® (note that the short-term energy enhancing jelly beans have an actual onset time of 30 minutes, which experimentally controls for any glucose entering the system) to eat while they worked on the task. They were instructed to eat another Sport Bean® whenever they felt the effects wearing off (when their performance would benefit from another one) and to press [SPACE BAR] each time they did so. These key presses captured perceived efficacy duration. As hypothesized, perceived efficacy duration was shorter for those in the difficult font condition (M_difficult = 6.25 minutes) than for those in the easy, standard font condition (M_easy = 8.15 minutes; F(1, 100) = 6.16, p < .05). While our main dependent variable was an on-line judgment of product efficacy duration, retrospective judgments of product efficacy duration showed an identical pattern of results such that those in the difficult font condition judged the Sport Beans® to have a shorter efficacy duration than those in the easy font condition (M_difficult = 2.90 vs. M_easy = 3.41; F(1, 109) = 4.24, p < .05). Additional measures collected ruled out the alternative explanation that results were due to differences in negative affect, decreased alertness, fatigue, or motivation across conditions.

In Study 2, we replicate the results of Study 1 with a physically challenging (rather than cognitively challenging) task. To manipulate task difficulty, we attached the survey material to clipboards of varying weight. Participants in the easy condition received an empty storage clipboard whereas those in the difficult condition received a clipboard filled with three, 2-pound hand weights (total added...
weight = 6 pounds). The first portion of the survey was unrelated to the target task (e.g., participants provided answers to trivia questions based on the board game Wits and Wagers) but necessary to have the participants hold the clipboards for twenty minutes prior to making their product efficacy duration evaluations. The second portion queried participants on two products – Rockstar Energy Gum® and Silverback Extreme® Energy Drink. Results replicate those of the previous study and confirm that perceptions of product efficacy duration are shorter (longer) when consumers perform a difficult (easy) task. We find that estimates of efficacy duration for two energy-enhancing products are nearly twice as large when participants perform a relatively easy physical task than when they perform a difficult one (Rockstar Energy Gum®: \( M_{\text{difficult}} = 9.36 \) vs. \( M_{\text{easy}} = 18.32; F(1, 73) = 6.44, p < .05 \); Silverback Extreme® Energy Drink: \( M_{\text{difficult}} = 15.97 \) vs. \( M_{\text{easy}} = 31.88; F(1, 73) = 4.38, p < .05 \)).

In Study 3, we manipulated perceived rather than actual task difficulty. In this study, we also varied consumers’ beliefs about efficacy duration via a priming technique that either reinforced the belief that duration depends on context, or countered the belief with evidence that duration is context-independent. Participants were given the same instructions to eat Jelly Belly Sport Beans®, this time while working on identical GMAT reading comprehension questions that were supposedly either difficult or easy. When participants read that efficacy duration is often dependent on contextual factors, the effect from Study 1 replicated \( F(1, 162) = 4.80, p < .05 \). In contrast, when they read that efficacy duration is not dependent on contextual factors, they did not exhibit the pattern of results found in our previous study \( F < 1 \).

In Study 4, we find that the presentation mode of manufacturer’s “suggested intake” (interval vs. fixed time format) affects duration judgments such that an interval (vs. fixed) format yields duration estimates in line with the malleable intuitive belief. When instructions for medication (Advil) are presented in an interval format (e.g., “Take every 2–4 hours”) versus a fixed time (e.g., “Take every 3 hours”), the same interactive effect with task difficulty emerges as in the previous study, such that participants in the interval format condition estimate efficacy duration to be shorter when anticipating to perform a difficult (vs. easy) task \( (M_{\text{difficult}} = 2.89 \) vs. \( M_{\text{easy}} = 4.28; F(1, 166) = 5.97, p = .02 \)). However, those presented with intake instructions in a “fixed” format show no significant difference in duration estimates across difficult and easy conditions \( F < 1 \).

Across four studies, we demonstrate that consumers hold an intuitive belief that product efficacy duration is context dependent; duration judgments are shorter (vs. longer) when consumers engage in tasks perceived to be difficult (vs. easy). These findings have important implications for product (mis)use. A potential consequence of the documented belief includes product over- and under-consumption which, undoubtedly, affects consumer health and well-being.

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LINKING ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN TO SUSTAINABLE CONSUMER BEHAVIORS: MOVING FROM ATTITUDES TO ACTION

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SUMMARY

Sustainable consumption continues to be a serious global concern. While it is important to provide policies as a foundation for promoting eco-responsibility, an understanding of the consumer’s behavioral element would be particularly helpful. Despite the prevailing claim of many Americans that they are environmentally concerned, there appears to be an “attitude to action” gap when it comes to actual environmental behavior.

To address this fundamental question, this paper takes two important steps. We review the literature to examine how an attitude of environmentalism has traditionally been operationalized in the past. It is suggested that some measures may overlook a prevailing multidimensional approach to environmentalism due to the coarseness of the scales. Environmentalism is viewed as containing differing dimensions that may or may not be related to each other. In that vein, an alternative is suggested that links seven separate environmental concerns to five different eco-friendly behaviors. A key point of this research points to the fact that environmental concern and its aligned behavior is influenced by a very individualized view of the various dimensions in the domain of sustainability.

Second, an examination of how sustainable consumption behavior has been measured will point to a need for a unit of analysis that more closely aligns behavior with the specific consumer attitudinal elements of environmentalism. By addressing these two points, we hope to add more clarity to the attitude to action gap by removing elements that might obscure the relationship. Moreover, by examining demographic information under this framework, we will shift the unit of analysis to a more specific level that addresses individual concerns, which will create more meaningful findings.

Motivated consumers willing to undertake pro-environmental behavior are necessary for obtaining material changes in consumption. However, a necessary element of consumer motivation is knowledge. To address that need, we attempt to show how policy messaging must first inform consumers how the link between one’s individual perceptions of environmental concern can be addressed and ultimately how it is linked to all other dimensions of environmentalism. This is an important step because it creates a framework for intrinsic motivation that can drive both individual changes in behavior and can galvanize support for appropriate policy tools that are needed to address this pressing issue.

This study examined attitudes and behavior for sustainable consumption. A total of 935 respondents completed a questionnaire distributed at a day devoted to sustainability on a university campus. Seven distinct dimensions of environmental concern (Stafford, Stafford, and Zimmer 1994) were included on the questionnaire. These seven dimensions included concern for waste, wildlife, biosphere, health, environmental technology, and popular issues. These were analyzed against five types of environmental behaviors adapted from the Harvard Sustainability Pledge (energy related, food related, waste related [recycling] water related, and “other” behaviors). The analysis also included demographic variables.

Using the GLM, significant demographic differences were observed in varying degrees across several of the concerns with higher education aligning with more pro-environmental behaviors. In addition, differing levels of concerns were found in the various domains of environmentalism with significant differences in the concerns for waste, environmental technology, and health. Concern for waste was the strongest predictor of pro-environmental behavior. More specifically, individuals that were concerned for waste were the most likely to engage in pro-environmental behavior and did so in three categories – food related, waste related, and all other eco-friendly behavior. This area of concern would, therefore, seem to be a likely starting point building consumer motivation through increased knowledge and empowerment.
The concerns from individuals for health-related and environmental technology-related areas were both manifested in energy-related behaviors. Still, consumers with other concerns would benefit by gaining an understanding of how to implement relatively simple behaviors that carry long-term positive consequences. Messaging in this manner can increase self-efficacy and empowerment, which are the foundation for increased intrinsic motivation. Alternatives for creating more informed consumers that could lead to increased public policy support are also discussed. References are available upon request.

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CONCEPTUALIZING GREEN HOUSEHOLD CONSUMPTION:
A BEHAVIORAL REASONING THEORY APPROACH

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SUMMARY
This study investigates the widely recognized mismatch between consumers’ positive attitudes towards sustainable consumption and their actual failure to engage in sustainable consumption behaviors. This conundrum presents a major challenge to policy makers who understand that smarter consumption is a necessary prerequisite for environmental sustainability (Kilbourne and Mittelstaedt 2011). Even though environmental problems are among the most prevalent facing society, current research (Luchs 2010) has shown few consumers change their behaviors to match their intentions of buying environmentally friendly products. Reducing the environmental impact of consumption behaviors holds great importance for sustainability. As such, this study seeks to build on prior research efforts and establish new linkages in the antecedents of green household consumption and also look into how the intention-behavior gap can begin to be eliminated.

This paper uses the Behavioral Reasoning Theory (Westaby 2005) as the conceptual framework and shows how consumers’ level of environmental consciousness impacts their perceived marketplace influence and ultimately how this perceived influence positively affects overall green household consumption. The Behavioral Reasoning Theory employs a values-reasons-behavior structure, where reasons are subjective factors used by individuals to explain their behavior and serve to mediate the relationship between values and behaviors. Two hypotheses are tested:

H1: The level of environmental concern positively influences perceived marketplace influence.

H2: The perceived marketplace influence of consumers positively influences green household consumption behaviors.

A survey was administered nationally and a final sample size of 372 respondents was attained. The measures of the three constructs in the model were adapted from other studies. The measure for Environmental Concern was based on work done by Mittelstaedt, Murphy, and Sherry (2009) regarding the ethical bases of sustainable consumption. For perceived consumer marketplace influence, Roberts (1996) PCE scale was adapted to include questions regarding whether individual environmentally friendly purchase activities will persuade others to buy similar products and influence companies to introduce more environmentally friendly products. In order to measure green household consumption, a scale from Mittelstaedt et al. (2011) regarding household habits was used and the reduced three item scale asked the respondent if they replace light bulbs with energy efficient bulbs, buy ENERGY STAR rated appliances, and reduce water usage as much as possible.

Support for both hypotheses was found. Support for H1 implies that the greater (lesser) degree of environmental concern displayed by consumers, the greater (lesser) they perceive their marketplace influence. Support for H2 suggests that when individuals perceive themselves to have an influence in the marketplace, they are more likely to practice household behaviors that are environmentally friendly.

The results from this study provide insight into ways in which the intention-behavior gap can be eliminated. It is found that without the inclusion of perceived consumer marketplace influence (PCMI) as a mediator, an individual’s level of environmental concern does not exhibit a significant impact on their tendency to engage in green household consumption. The findings legitimize the intention-behavior gap found by Luchs et al. (2010). This study goes beyond simple recognition of this gap, however, and highlights the contribution of PCMI in helping to close the gap. The introduction of this measure goes beyond similar measures like perceived consumer effectiveness to provide a view how on consumers perceive their effect on the marketplace.

This study helps to expand the scope of consumption research, as called for by Prothero et al. (2011) and discusses how a policy of empowerment could be useful in impacting green household consumption. References are available upon request.
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ENHANCING CONSUMERS’ SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION PRACTICES: THE ROLE OF ALTERNATIVE SUSTAINABILITY DISCLOSURES IN AFFECTING PRODUCT EVALUATIONS AND PURCHASE INTENTIONS

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SUMMARY

In an effort to improve consumers’ engagement in pro-environmental efforts, Sheth, Sethia, and Srinivas (2011) suggest encouraging consumers to make mindful choices in which their consumption is based on temperance with regard to caring for self, community, and nature. When purchasing products, however, individuals often do not consider the post-purchase consequences, such as the disposal of the product. Additionally, individuals’ lack of ability to evaluate accurately the initial stages of the product life cycle, including the extracting and processing of raw material, manufacturing, and packaging at the point of purchase may prevent consumers from making mindful choices. The primary purpose of this paper is to examine how the addition of various sustainability labeling disclosure alternatives on product packaging affects consumers’ attitudes and purchase intentions. This paper examines the use of both a single sustainability index values and ratings of multiple sustainability dimensions in a mixed experimental design. Alternative sustainability labels that vary in the type and level of information disclosed are constructed, followed by an experiment examining consumers’ product perceptions and responses.

The main experiment was a 2 (dimensions of sustainability: absent (control) or 3 dimensions present) × 2 (index disclosure: absent (control) or, an index value present) × 3 (sustainability levels: low, moderate, or high) mixed experimental design. The sustainability dimensions and index manipulations were between-subjects factors and the levels were a within-subjects factor. The brand names and sustainability levels were rotated across the three detergent packages to control for possible order effects.

The conditions of the study were randomly assigned to participants and the order of stimuli was counterbalanced. To simulate the retail environment in which consumers face an array of product choices at the retail shelf, the three laundry detergent stimuli were shown on a retail shelf simultaneously. After exposure, participants completed an online survey in a lab setting. A total of 242 undergraduate students at a major southern university participated for course credit (Mage = 21.7 years). Approximately 45 percent of the participants were male.

Our findings generally suggest that sustainability disclosures appear capable of influencing individuals’ product evaluations and purchase intentions. The findings regarding labeling factors suggest that presenting either index or dimension scores may be effective in communicating sustainability information to consumers. For instance, when compared to a disclosure control (similar to current market conditions), consumers appeared capable of evaluating the levels of laundry detergents appropriately when either an index score or more detailed dimensional information was provided. This pattern of results was relatively consistent for both high and low sustainability levels for the laundry detergent products across the various evaluation and intention dependent variables. In addition, relative to the no disclosure control, the moderate level of sustainability did not show any substantial differences in product evaluations when either the index score or dimension values were provided.

In terms of the amount of information disclosed in labeling, the simpler index score seemed as effective as more complex disclosures. While further research is needed, these data suggest that disclosing dimensional information and more complex information is not crucial to aid in consumer evaluations and decisions. This finding is consistent with previous literature indicating that providing more detailed information may create clutter and distraction that could adversely impact consumer use in evaluations (i.e., Balasubramanian and Cole 2002).

This study provides some important initial implications that should be of interest to policy makers, researchers, and practitioners interested in sustainability disclosure options. From policy and research perspectives, this paper highlights the potential importance of the provision of sustainability disclosures and the amount of information that must be disclosed to achieve effects on evaluations. The implementation of effective sustainability labeling
would give motivated individuals an opportunity to behave in a pro-sustainable manner. Effects at the consumer level in turn will encourage additional efforts by companies to change life cycle and supply chain processes to improve sustainability levels disclosed to consumers.

From the perspective of practitioners, the findings for the index and dimensional scores were found to be an effective communication tool for laundry detergents that vary in sustainability level. Depending on the sustainability level of products, the disclosure may act as a value-added or non-value (i.e., “sustainability liability”) attribute. This issue should be carefully considered prior to initiating any labeling system. Assuming the sustainability label is perceived as a value-added attribute, this could potentially encourage manufacturers to engage in more sustainable practices to lower environmental impact and to gain competitive advantage in the marketplace.

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RECYCLING GONE BAD: WHEN THE OPTION TO RECYCLE INCREASES RESOURCE CONSUMPTION

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SUMMARY

Millions of curbside recycling facilities, in addition to recycling bins in offices and other areas, have been set up to enhance the availability of recycling. The basic premise of this policy is intuitively appealing: when recycling options are more widely available, people should be more inclined to recycle versus when recycling is less widely available or inconvenient (McCarty and Shrum 1994, 2001). However, this policy may be suboptimal unless consumers’ consumption level is independent of the availability of the option to recycle, an assumption which may not hold in many situations. In this project, we consider the possibility that the ability to recycle can have an impact on consumers’ consumption level and propose that there may be unintended adverse effects of focusing exclusively on making recycling convenient and widespread. More specifically, we examine the effects of recycling availability on resource usage and the mediating role of anticipated guilt.

A number of studies have shown that the anticipation of consumption pleasures and guilt play a central role in determining how much a person consumes (e.g., Wansink and Chandon 2006; Wertenbroch 1998). Anticipated guilt has also been shown to influence ethical (Steenhaut and Kenhove 2006) and conservation behavior such as recycling (Kaiser 2006). We propose that disposing of a product in a non-environmentally friendly way may be accompanied by some level of guilt, and that the ability to recycle can be thought of as a means to reduce the guilt associated with consuming and disposing of a product. In essence, a recycling bin may serve as a “get out of jail free” card (Bolton, Cohen, and Bloom 2006). Therefore, we expect that convenient recycling can have unintended consequences, specifically increasing consumption through mitigation of the guilt associated with (over) consumption.

In study one, our goal was simply to see if the option to recycle has an effect on consumption using a two factor, between-subjects design with participants assigned to conditions featuring either a trash can alone or a recycling bin and trash can. The cover story described the experiment as being a product evaluation task. Part of the procedure involved testing the performance of a pair of scissors by cutting a series of common shapes out of plain, white paper. Information about the sizes of the shapes or the amount of paper that should be used in the task was purposely left unspecified. Participants were also asked to dispose of any scraps in the receptacle(s) provided in the room, which were manipulated to be a trash can and recycling bin or a trash can alone. To help minimize suspicion by reinforcing the product evaluation component of the task, participants completed distractor tasks both before and after the cutting task. Results support our hypothesis that the option to recycle can increase consumption compared to when the option to recycle is not available. The mean weight of paper used by participants in the recycling option condition (M = 17.21 grams) was significantly higher than in the trash can only condition (M = 9.45 grams, t(23) = 2.52, p = .019, η² = .216).

Study two extends the findings from our first study to a different context and also investigates the role of anticipated guilt as a mediator by measuring the anticipated emotions associated with disposal in a trash can compared to a recycling bin. We conducted a two factor (disposal option: recycling bin, trash can), between-subjects experiment to test the hypothesis that the option of recycling may serve as a guilt reduction mechanism such that consumption increases relative to when only a trash can is available. Two versions of a scenario were created involving a decision about whether to dispose of (and reprint) a set of pages containing a typographical error or to use them as is. In each scenario, participants were told to imagine that they were members of a club and that it was their turn to lead the club’s monthly meeting. They were told that on the way to the meeting, they stopped by the printer room to pick up 15 printout packets to be used during the meeting. The printouts were described as containing a typographical error and the room was said to have a printer and laptop available to use (at no monetary cost) along with either a trash can or recycling bin. Participants in the recycling bin condition indicated higher intent to dispose of the copies containing the typographical error (M = 5.52) than those in the trash can condition (M = 4.28; F(1, 48) = 4.72, p = .035, η² = .090). Consistent with our expectations, participants anticipated that they would feel less guilt if disposing of the printouts in the...
recycling bin versus the trash can (M = 2.36 vs. M = 3.60, respectively). A mediation analysis suggested that anticipated guilt mediated the effect of disposal option on intentions to dispose.

The general focus on increasing recycling options and convenience as the best course of action to help the environment is based on a key assumption that consumers’ consumption level is independent of the availability of the option to recycle. Our results cast doubt on this assumption. In two experiments involving both actual behavior and hypothetical scenarios, we found that the availability of a recycling option can increase resource usage, with the change in usage attributable to reduced anticipated guilt. Our study provides additional support for the perspective regarding recycling as altruistic behavior that can be influenced by anticipated emotion, in this case, guilt. Additionally, our work contributes to the (typically cost-focused) literature on rebound effects (e.g., Small and Van Dender 2007; Sorrell et al. 2009) by showing that non-cost, affective factors can also lead to increased consumption. Moreover, studies of spillover (Thøgersen and Crompton 2009) and licensing effects (Khan and Dhar 2006; Mazar and Zhong 2010) focus on how virtuous behavior at one point in time or in one domain can subsequently be followed by less virtuous behavior at a later time or in a different domain. Rather than prior decisions guiding subsequent choices, we find evidence that forecasts of post-decision emotion (guilt) may also affect behavior. Additional theoretical and practical implications are discussed. References are available upon request.

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TO REPAIR OR NOT TO REPAIR: WHAT IS THE MOTIVATION?

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SUMMARY

Perhaps because of the floundering economy in the past few years, repair services are seeing an increase in business. To conserve money, many people are becoming more frugal in their spending and consuming behaviors. Beyond financial reasons, there may also be environmental motivations for increased interest in repair. Extending the lifetime of a product leads to a reduction of the environmental impact of our consumption patterns (van Nes and Cramer 2006). If consumers hold on to their possessions longer and delay the decision to buy a replacement, the overall material throughput in provision systems would be reduced (Cooper 2005). Thus, it is important for researchers and policy makers interested in promoting sustainable consumption to understand factors that influence a consumer’s decision to repair or replace a product. Despite the importance of repair decisions for consumers and for the environment, little research has examined the motivation and propensity to repair products. This research attempts to fill this gap by conducting a survey to assess important attitudes, motivations and traits related to repair among U.S. consumers. The findings of this study will contribute to research on consumer behavior and sustainability by observing the propensity to repair among U.S. consumers and relating this propensity to other consumer attitudes, motivations, and traits.

In order to gain a better understanding of repair behavior and the attitudes, motivations and traits that might influence this behavior, an exploratory survey was conducted with a sample of U.S. consumers through Amazon Mechanical Turk (www.mturk.com). This online marketplace provides a forum for individuals to post surveys that are completed by respondents or “Workers.” The survey is posted on the website, and respondents are able to choose to complete it and are paid once they enter the correct completion code onto the Mechanical Turk website. The survey was set to have a maximum of 300 respondents, after which it was no longer available. Out of the 300 responses that passed the attention checks, two were discarded after the survey closed due to missing or conflicting answers, resulting in a total of 298 valid surveys. Respondents were 55 percent female, 21.5 percent were aged 25–29 and 55 percent were 35 years old or younger. Forty-four percent had at least some college education and 60 percent made $40,000 or under in annual income. Most respondents, 52 percent, lived in either the northeast or southeast.

To understand more about product repairers, descriptive statistics were developed for items that measured attitudes towards repair (about businesses, government, and society), motivations for repair, and acquisition and usage behaviors related to behavior. For attitudes, more than 80 percent of the sample indicated agreement (“Agree” or “Strongly Agree”) with four attitudinal statements: “Our society has a throw-away mentality when it comes to discarding products,” “Our society should be concerned with the waste that is filling up landfills,” “Companies should provide information about how to repair products,” and “Companies should make products so they can be easily repaired.” In terms of motivations, there was widespread agreement (more than 75 percent of the sample) on four reasons for repairing or not repairing a product: “The more I paid for the product, the more likely I am to have it repaired,” “The more I paid for the product, the more likely I am to have it repaired,” “The cost of the repair is the biggest factor in deciding whether to repair a product,” and “I’ll have a product repaired as long as it is cheaper than buying a new product.” Finally, more than 75 percent of the sample agreed with two of the three acquisition and usage behaviors: “I take care of my products so they won’t break” and “I purchase quality products that will last and be worth repairing.”

Regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses concerning repair propensity and other consumer traits. Each scale was analyzed in a separate regression model with repair propensity. Supporting H1, environmental concern was positively related to repair propensity ($t = 3.64, p < .001$). Because the frugality scale was not unidimensional, each separate dimension was analyzed in a separate regression model. Both stewardship ($t = 9.86, p < .001$) and tightwad ($t = 5.21, p < .001$) were positively related to repair propensity, supporting H2. As expected, product retention tendency was positively related to repair propensity ($t = 2.70, p < .01$) as was use innovativeness ($t = 9.53, p < .001$), supporting H3 and H4. Product care was significantly related to repair propensity ($t = 4.30, p < .001$), supporting H5. Instrumental materialism, terminal materialism, and product love were not significantly relat-
ed to repair propensity. None of the demographic variables, including age, were significantly related to repair propensity.

These results provide insights into repair that will be of interest to marketers and policy makers alike. The prevalence of different attitudes relating to repair among our sample indicate that consumers are concerned about the environmental impact of product disposal and that they feel that companies have a social responsibility to facilitate the repair of the products they sell. In addition, both of these attitudes appear to be positively related to repair propensity. Conversely, consumers seem to be much less in favor of a strong government role in promoting or facilitating repair; the two statements regarding government intervention received the lowest agreement percent of all seven statements. The implication of these results for marketers and policy makers is that consumers do appear to be concerned about repair, and they appear to feel that it is the manufacturer’s responsibility to make repair more feasible. Along these lines, it is interesting to note that nearly two-thirds of the sample agreed with the statement that “Companies make products difficult to repair so you have to buy a new one.” Thus there may be an opportunity for marketers to build consumer goodwill by facilitating repair, and there is likely a role for policy makers in terms of creating regulations and incentives for businesses to do so. Future research is needed to test these propositions and to more closely examine the relationship between these attitudes and repair behavior. References are available upon request.

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SOCIAL LUBRICATION AND VIRTUAL LEARNING: DEVELOPING THE SOCIAL LUBRICATION MODEL FOR INSIGHTS INTO NEOPHYTE LEGAL BINGE DRINKING

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SUMMARY

The most prominent public and health policy issues surrounding alcohol are consumption by the young and vulnerable, alcohol related violence, drink driving, binge drinking and alcoholism. Collectively, alcohol related consumption results in approximately 4 percent of all global deaths each year (World Health Organization 2011) and in Australia where the research took place, approximately 4,000 alcohol related deaths occur each year (Chikritzhs et al. 2003). Around a third of young Australian males (30.5%) and a quarter of females (25%) in their 20’s consume alcohol at high risk levels at least once a month (AIHW 2005). However, these estimates of harm could be understated with the Australian Cancer Council recently proclaiming that approximately 5 percent of all cancers can be attributed to long term alcohol consumption, thereby suggesting that there is no safe level of alcohol consumption (Winstanley et al. 2011).

Changing social patterns, the fragmentation of media and the ascension of social media have changed the way young adults communicate. Facebook has become the preferred form of communication between young adults due to its relative cost-effectiveness, and its ability to enable users to communicate to many receivers at one time, benefitting real time social interactions (Shih 2009). As consumers are able to stay in more constant, albeit virtual, contact and are thus able to influence, and be influenced by, others on a larger scale, certain actions and behaviors can now be validated or legitimized. This largely suggests Facebook is a strong driver of contemporary culture in young adults.

Two of the most prominent cultures among young adults revolve around Facebook (Patterson 2011) and alcohol (Fitzgerald and Jordan 2009). The literature and countless anecdotes from Gen Y support the proposition that these two consumer cultures intertwine in Gen Y, and that peer influence exercised through Facebook results in behavioral can directly influence alcohol consumption. Anyone younger than thirty without Facebook is “technologically-challenged” and for those aged 18–24, “not to be on Facebook, is not to exist” (Patterson 2011, p. 2).

This research adapts Bandura’s dual paths of influence model adapted to account for social media and the strong role of culture and peer influence on neophyte alcohol consumption. The proposed Social Lubrication Model differentiates social from traditional media, recognizes the importance of word of mouth, and specifies the overlapping of alcohol and Facebook cultures among 18 to 24-year-old neophyte drinkers. Social learning implies that the online communications by a consumer’s peers can exemplify and legitimize new behavior or culture to be embraced, typified in this study by Facebook communications glorifying alcohol consumption.

To meet University ethics requirements, research subjects were required to opt-in to the study, thus giving the researchers permission to collect, document, and analyze their public Facebook communications. This was achieved by subjects clicking the “attending” button. Invitations were sent out to one of the researcher’s “Facebook friends” who were within the ages of 18 to 24 (N = 520), with 306 respondents (179 male, 127 female) agreeing to take part in this study.

Many young adults (94% of the participants) used Facebook to communicate themselves consuming alcohol or to demonstrate that they aspire to get intoxicated. As the main platform for young adult communication, Facebook is often used to organize meetings and events where alcohol consumption will take place (10.5%). Subsequently, intoxicated experiences are re-lived over Facebook (10%). This style of communications is used to piece together the occurrences of what happened whilst the young adults where intoxicated. Soft forms of bullying, we called alco-bullying, occurred between peers in regard to how much someone can drink (6.5%).
From a policy perspective, the Social Lubrication Model supports earlier theories suggesting that broader social systems are more influential on a consumer’s behavior than their own personal choices. Young adult Facebook users are concerned with how their peers see them in regard to their involvement in the drinking social system, and for that reason make an effort to broadcast this involvement. Additionally, the research indicates peer influence over Facebook is a relevant factor contributing to the contemporary young adult drinking culture.

As social systems and social norms are more powerful than individual choices, policy makers should be looking at measures to better understand and target various social systems and the elements within them that are fueling a binge drinking culture for young adults. This is a major point of difference to the present appeals for individual consumers to limit their amount of alcohol consumption. References are available upon request.

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PERMISSION EMAIL MESSAGES SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE GAMBLER RETENTION

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SUMMARY

Online gambling is an increasingly popular form of delivering a gambling experience over the World Wide Web and with mobile phone platforms. This rapidly growing subcategory of the estimated $117.6 billion spent annually on gambling world-wide. In the last ten years, online gambling has experienced strong growth in number of game sites, types of games and money wagering. Online gambling has been criticized as a largely unregulated product that tends to foster pathological play in a significant portion of their players. Some researchers believe that the inherent nature of online gambling has the potential to increase problem gambling rates. Nonetheless, there is little empirical evidence of the level of problem gambling with online providers.

Online gambling companies require potential players to provide their email address and mobile phone numbers as part of the registration process. These sites provide detailed instructions to the players so that any emails from the company can avoid being tagged as spam. These email addresses and phone numbers provide online marketers of gambling products potent and inexpensive media to reach their customers while they are gambling. This ability to expose the persuasive message to the consumer while they gamble makes this format unique from other media for online gambling providers. These messages may induce retention of the gamblers as well as increased gambling. This outcome may be good for the gambling providers, but increasing retention of gamblers has been linked to pathological consumption called problem gambling.

Prior studies have shown that consumers respond favorably to permission-based advertising. Permission-based mobile advertising can generate favorable attitude toward the brand, while unauthorized spamming advertising can generate negative attitude toward the mobile advertising. The emails also increase respondents’ visits to other pages of the gambling website, with some respondents reporting that they forwarded the email messages to their friends and intentions for purchasing items from the site.

The effects of repeated and targeted persuasive messages that are sent to online consumers of gambling is a largely unknown and unregulated area of consumption. Therefore, it was expected that sending permission email messages would be positively associated with extending the length of gambling (retention).

An online gambling experiment used permission email messages in an attempt to increase gambler retention. This gambling experiment website was accessible 24/7, where players could log-in from any location in the world with a web-enabled device. The subjects were students enrolled at the university that were at least 18 years old (legal age to gamble in Australia) and had gambled in the last twelve-months.

Subjects were recruited through posters on campus, permission email messages from the student guild and a recruiting page on the gambling website. These recruitment media offered a jackpot prize of $2,000 Australian Dollars to the player with the highest net e-dollar winnings in their betting account at the end of the experiment.

The promotion for the experiment recruited participants who were able to register with the website. A total of 168 consumer/gambler subjects proceeded to bet on at least one game and formed the working sample for analyses. Players’ betting data when using the game was captured unobtrusively by the e-casino’s proprietary software. A measure of retention was determined as the probability that a player, who has made at least one bet, will continue to bet for a predetermined time period.

Survival Analysis was used to construct a dependent measure of gambler retention. The survival method for modeling retention uses both subjects that cease to be and remain customers (censored cases) by the end of a study period. In this study, K-M survival curves were used to
compare the survival probabilities between groups of subjects based on behavioural segregators like groups with high versus low betting frequency.

One of five different permission email messages sent to non-problem online gamblers had a significant effect in extending the median gamblers’ play 20 days beyond the average of nine days. The results suggest that permission email messages can be linked to quite large increases in how long a non problem customer gambles (retention). Because gambling expenditures and frequency of gambling are positively associated with length of time gambling, the effects of retention should be of interest to the gambling industry, other online marketers and the regulators responsible for protecting potentially vulnerable online populations.

Although this study did not measure problem gamblers, the increase in gambling behaviour for non-problem gamblers were driven through permission emails that are largely unregulated. Some initial non problem subjects in the experiment were found to bet more than two thousand times over the 36 days of the experiment. It was not possible to retest the subjects to see if any became problem gamblers.

Studies testing gambling warning messages have found that these messages have not led to changes in gambling behavior, with only cognitive changes like beliefs about the product (e.g., “false beliefs” in gambling) have been reported. That one in five messages tested here increased retention suggest that perhaps at least some permission email messages possess something that makes them more potent than other messages tested. Although gambling warnings often use strong claims like possible addiction, permission messages from trusted sources may get a better response. Gamblers may trust their gambling provider more than other sources. However, there appears to be little if any use of permission email to convey warnings about problem gambling by online gambling sites contacted by the authors. Clearly, much more research should be done to further understand gamblers’ responses to messages sent to them. References are available upon request.

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YOUNG PEOPLE’S KNOWLEDGE OF ALCOHOL PRICES IN A RETAIL CONTEXT

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SUMMARY

Young people’s alcohol intake constantly receives media attention, as their alcohol habits are considered problematic. The alcohol intake of young people can be explained by numerous factors, however, several European countries consider increasing alcohol taxes to confront this problem. In doing so, decision makers more or less implicitly assume that young people know in-store prices of alcohol they buy with reasonable accuracy and therefore should be able to notice and ultimately act upon higher prices resulting from increased alcohol taxes. For alcohol tax increases to impact young people’s alcohol intake they must be price sensitive and a prerequisite for this is fairly accurate and accessible price knowledge. Several studies have examined consumer price knowledge of groceries and generally find consumers to be unaware of prices, even for items they have just chosen (e.g., Dickson and Sawyer 1990; Vanhuele and Drèze 2002). Yet, alcoholic beverages have not previously been dealt within this line of research, neither have prior studies given any special attention to price knowledge of young people. In fact, the present study is the first to examine young people’s knowledge of alcohol prices. In addition, we identify determinants of young people’s price knowledge of alcohol. That is, we assess the effects of purchasing a special, loyalty, buying frequency, recency, recognizable prices, and demographics.

We carried out personal interviews, over a period of 14 days in a large Danish shopping mall. According to a report from the Danish National Board of Health, young Danes prefer beer, “alcopops” (pre-mixed spirits, ciders, and alcohol containing caffeine) and spirits. Hence, these three alcohol categories were selected for the present study. Every third person (resembling a person from the target group) passing a fixed point in the shopping mall was intercepted. Next, a screening question was used to confirm the person’s age. We used the same target group; young people aged 16 to 25, as the Danish National Board of Health targets with alcohol campaigns. The respondents were asked if they had bought in one of the focal categories at a retail store within the last four weeks. If so, they identified the most recently bought item and were asked to state when and where it was purchased (to compare their price estimate with the actual price).

In line with Monroe and Lee’s (1999) recommendations, we applied an explicit as well as an implicit price-memory test to uncover different levels of young people’s knowledge of alcohol prices. First, people may know the actual price “by heart,” e.g., through intentional price learning, which was measured by an explicit price-recall test (e.g., Wakefield and Inman 1993). People who fail to recall the actual price may still have a sense of familiarity with the normal price, based on unconscious price information processing. To uncover such implicit price knowledge we used a judgment task that measured deal-spotting ability (Vanhuele and Drèze 2002). Thus, respondents judged the attractiveness of four prices (±15 and 30% from the normal price) relative to the normal price. The respondents also answered a number of questions relating to brand loyalty, recency of exposure, buying frequency, and demographics. Each interview lasted four to five minutes. In total, we interviewed 151 young people of which 134 were applicable for the analysis.

Results show that, on average, 33.6 percent of the respondents were able to recall the exact price of their most recent alcohol purchase in a retail context. This result, however, covers significant differences across the focal categories: Beer (22.5%), spirits (31.3%), and “alcopops” (41.9%). The same pattern recurs in the deal-spotting test. Generally, a majority (60.4%) of young people was able to judge prices of alcohol at the 15 percent margin from the normal price; with correct deal-spotting ability spanning from 39.3 percent for beer to 71.2 percent for “alcopops” (63.6% for spirits). Only a minority, on average 19.7 percent, could be regarded as deal oblivious (i.e., not even able to spot a deal at the 30 percent margin). Our results thus suggest that the majority of young people at minimum hold reference prices for alcohol at the 15 to 30 percent margin. In addition, the price-recall results indicate that a fairly large segment stores episodic price knowledge in long-term memory and such strong memory traces likely originate from intentional processing of price.
information. This suggests that a rather large segment of young people actively searches for prices of alcohol while in store.

We ran logistic regressions with correct price recall and correct deal spotting as dependent variables. Results show a positive effect of purchasing a special on correct price recall ($p < .01$) and correct deal spotting ($p < .05$). Interestingly, the odds of correct price recall is 14 times higher when respondents bought alcohol with an easily recognizable price (defined as prices dividable by five, e.g., DKK 10 or 25) than if they did not ($p < .01$). We found no significant effect of either recency of price exposure or individual buying frequency in the category, nor of brand loyalty or demographics. Thus, the results suggest that young people’s alcohol price knowledge is independent of age (in the age span 16 to 25), gender and income, which indicates that they would do a poor job as segmentation criteria in communicating about alcohol taxes to young people.

From a public policy perspective, the results seemingly support the assumptions behind increasing alcohol taxes, although our results also suggest that it depends on the magnitude of such increases. Hence, the majority of young people would not notice a price increase of 5 percent (47.8% could recall the price within 5%) and almost 40 percent of the respondents could not spot a deal at the 15 percent margin. If young people do not notice a price increase, they most likely will not react to it. However, we also observe huge differences across alcohol categories and our results suggest that policy makers should consider such category variations before implementing tax increases.

The results indicate that the majority of young people approaches stores with fairly inaccurate perceptions of alcohol prices, which implies that retailers can implement minor stepwise price increases for alcohol without being detected by most young people. In normal circumstances, such systematic price increases could be a cause for concern from a public policy perspective, but in this case it potentially approaches a “win-win situation.” Yet, from a managerial point of view stepwise price increases must remain within consumers’ reference price zones to avoid detection (Kalyanaram and Little 1994), whereas detection of price increases would be highly desirable from a public policy perspective as this is a prerequisite for alcohol taxes to impact alcohol intake.

Several limitations apply to this study and point to opportunities for further research. Future studies could benefit from getting closer to the point of purchase to examine young people’s in-store price checking behavior of alcohol or study their knowledge and use of prices in other relevant contexts such as bars, nightclubs or restaurants. The present study was carried out in Denmark and here alcohol prices are relatively high and we therefore call for cross-country comparisons of young people’s knowledge of alcohol prices. Increasing alcohol taxes will not necessarily lead to a decrease in alcohol intake even if young people notice the resulting price increases. Rather than adjusting their alcohol intake, young people may choose to switch to cheaper brands. We have not covered this aspect, but instead focused on young people’s knowledge of alcohol prices and thus their ability to notice price increases, which is a first prerequisite for changing young people’s alcohol intake through alcohol taxes. References are available upon request.

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THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCE OF AN EGM WARNING

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SUMMARY

Using an online casino, we investigated how different ways for delivering Electronic Gaming Machine (EGM) warnings affected regular gamblers’ EGM use. We used warnings that are often tested in gambling studies. These warnings are being under consideration for implementation in “land-based” casinos in countries like Australia.

Recreational gamblers’ reactions to EGM warnings are rarely studied. We could find only one article that used a sample of non-problem gamblers. Recreational gamblers are an important and large group who experience the same warnings as problem gamblers. It is estimated that they account for up to 99 percent of the population who gambles; in OECD countries, it is estimated that 80 percent of the population will gamble in a year. Until now, we do not know how recreational gamblers react to these warnings. Our experiment found one type of warning has the unintended consequence of significantly increasing gambling behavior in recreational gamblers.

Strong warnings are usually delivered via a “pop-up” window. A gambling warning message typically accompanies pop-ups. This pop-up temporarily prevents play from continuing. The pop-up appears after a predetermined number of spins (e.g., every 30 spins). Play resumes automatically after a predefined period (e.g., pop-up lasts seven seconds), or when the gambler clicks the pop-up to minimize it. Pop-ups are thought to work because they are intrusive, serving as a form of intervention to disrupt the flow of gambling, perhaps making it less enjoyable. However, research with pop-ups has only measured intentions to gamble in problem gamblers.

Weak warnings are non-intrusive warnings delivered as text or graphics “crawling,” “jiggling,” or “flashing” across different parts of the screen. These warnings do not disrupt play. These contain the same types of messages as strong warnings. Animated weak warnings tend to appear at predetermined intervals while static text or graphical weak warnings tend to be constantly visible to the gambler.

Warnings are designed to deter and reduce gambling. Product warnings have been reported as both effective and ineffective at altering consumers’ product use behavior. There are many reports of warnings increasing product use. This paradoxical effect has been highlighted by many authors and may also apply to EGM warnings. This provides the impetus to test EGM warnings, especially on recreational gamblers’ behavior.

Method

We constructed an online casino that was accessible on the internet. This meant that participants in our experiment could log-on and gamble from anywhere and at anytime, increasing the realism of our experiment. Research has shown that online gambling is often undertaken from home or work. The casino was designed to look and feel like a real online-casino. It provided different reel-games (EGMs).

We recruited our experiment’s participants from the staff and students of a major Australian public university. They had to be at least 18 years old; this is the legal gambling age in Australia. Subjects were screened using the Southern Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS). Problem gamblers were excluded from study and sent information about problem gambling.

After verifying their identity, subjects were assigned unique user names and given $100 in e-money as an initial stake. They could increase their stake with administrative work for the university that paid $25 per hour. This rate is similar to what they would earn for this type of work; this added real “value” to their gambling purchase. Participants could not exchange the e-money for cash. They played for a jackpot prize of $2,000 real Australian dollars. The person(s) at the end of the experiment with the most money in their gambling account won the jackpot.

When participants logged on, they were exposed to different types of warnings (strong, weak or control-no warning); this was keyed to their unique user names. The
sequence of exposure was randomized. All other factors like machine reel spin speed, payout speed and payout regime were kept constant. Only subjects who had received at least two warnings were used for analysis – they had to have logged in twice and played at least 30 spins each time.

The experiment ran for 32 days. There were 141 participants for this analysis and they played 288 sessions exposed to strong warnings, 314 sessions exposed to weak warnings and 229 sessions exposed to the control of no-warning but had a static message asking them to rate satisfaction with the game.

**Result**

When participants were exposed to weak warnings, they gambled significantly more ($p < .05$) than the control and strong warning treatments. Contrary to what was expected, the recreational gamblers in our naturalistic field experiment bet more money and played more spins when they received the weak warning. Previous research that tested these same/similar warnings on problem gamblers reported the strong warning significantly able to reduce intentions to gamble. While we did not record gambling intentions, exposure to warnings increased overall gambling behavior in non-problem recreational gamblers. Exposure to weak warnings significantly increased gambling behavior. Exposure to strong warnings also increased gambling behavior, but was not significant.

**Conclusion**

Our finding seems to thwart the general acceptance among gambling researchers that warnings will reduce gambling intentions. It is often assumed that intentions will have some degree of translation into behavior.

The intention behind warnings mandated by public policy is to educate consumers. This education helps them to make better choices. Warnings are supposed to decrease or stop product use. The result of our experiment does not support this hypothesis, at least for our sample of recreational gamblers without gambling problems.

Research into gambling warnings, especially EGM warnings, has employed unrealistic analogue settings. The majority of studies have measured warnings’ effects on intentions to gamble; they have not measured behavior. We have measured behavior.

Almost all studies have used only problem gamblers. This seems illogical when the majority of gamblers don’t have pathological gambling dependencies. We have measured this vast majority of recreational gamblers.

We have found a result that is opposite to that reported in other studies. EGM warnings that are tested in many other studies increases gambling behavior in our sample. This raises an alarm about the wisdom of implementing weak EGM warnings. Increasing recreational gamblers’ gambling behavior is likely to make them heavier gamblers. Heavy and more intensive gambling is one of the signs of problem gambling. While it is a stretch, this warning may promote unhealthy gambling habits, promoting escalation towards problem gambling. Our finding underlines the importance of testing warning messages on all user groups, not just groups that have problems misusing and abusing products. This is food for thought. References are available upon request.

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CONSUMERS’ ETHICAL PERCEPTIONS OF MARKETING TO THE BOTTOM OF THE PYRAMID

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ABSTRACT

Marketing products to Bottom of Pyramid (BOP) consumers can be a profitable endeavor for both companies. However, it can raise ethical concerns. This paper’s framework empirically examines the ethical effects of marketing FMCGs to BOP consumers by evaluating the average (non-BOP) consumer’s company evaluations as well their willingness to take action towards the company.

INTRODUCTION

Research under the topic of “Bottom of Pyramid” (BOP) has emphasized how marketing to the world’s poor, defined as an individual earning approximately $2 per day (Prahalad 2004), is a profitable endeavor for both national and multinational companies, as well as a major source for future organizational growth. This concept is summarized in the following quote:

“The real source of market promise is not the wealthy few in the developing world, or even the emerging middle-income consumers: It is the billions of aspiring poor who are joining the market economy for the first time” (Prahalad and Hart 2002, p. 2).

This statement summarizing the BOP consumer proposition translates into a three pronged assertion for companies:

1. There is untapped purchasing power potential at the bottom of the pyramid.
2. There is an opportunity for private companies to generate profits by marketing to the poor.
3. The onus is on multi-national corporations (MNCs) to be leaders in this initiative (Prahalad 2004; Prahalad and Hammond 2002).

The current size of the BOP market segment is estimated at approximately 4 billion people or approximately two-thirds of the world’s population. This number expected to grow to six billion people with $5 trillion in purchasing power over the next 40 years (Karmachandani, Kubansky, and Lalwani 2011). These stunning figures present an even more compelling case for companies to target this growing consumer segment (Prahalad and Hammond 2002; Prahalad and Hart 2002).

The prospective reward for companies who choose to target this segment with these marketing tactics include “...growth, profits, and incalculable contributions to the humankind” by potentially providing a better life to the poor (Hammond and Prahalad 2004; Prahalad and Hammond 2002; Prahalad and Hart 2002). The overarching implication of the social good aspect of this paradigm is that when companies provide basic goods and services to the BOP segment, the companies reduce the cost to the consumer (due to economies of scale) and in turn improve the consumer’s standard of living (Hahn 2009; Prahalad and Hammond 2002). However, aggressive or exploitative business practices accompanying marketplace transactions among low income consumers have been pointed out by a number of researchers (Caplovitz 1963; Hill and Kozup 2007; Murphy and Laczniak 2006) and multinational involvement in marketing to the BOP presents an even greater threat for exploitation (Santos and Laczniak 2009).

These practices raise ethical concerns over the issue of target marketing (Davidson 2009; Marsh 2009). Products marketed by MNCs specifically to BOP consumers may displace local products and induce overspending by poor consumers who cannot afford it (Johnson 2005). Companies that aggressively target the BOP segment with discretionary products like cosmetics, shampoo, fairness cream, deodorant, sunscreen lotion, cosmetics, tobacco products, alcohol, etc. can divert funds from the purchase and consumption of products that fulfill basic needs such as education, nutrition and health care (Jaiswal 2008). This implies that marketing that targets BOP consumers for certain types of products carries the risk of doing more harm than good, and exacerbates the ethical concern over exploitative marketing practices. It is also important to recognize that the impact of targeted marketing to BOP consumers goes beyond the targeted segment itself. Specifically, the choice to market to BOP consumers can
affect the company’s or the brand’s perception among consumers in general in the marketplace, and can alter consumer responses.

This research paper presents a framework for empirically examining the ethical evaluation of targeted marketing of fast moving consumer goods to the BOP consumer market. This examination measures the ethical evaluation by the average (non-BOP) consumer of marketing targeted at the BOP segment, as well as the average consumer’s willingness to take action based on their ethical evaluation of the company’s practices.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND AND FRAMEWORK

Market segmentation and target marketing form the foundation of marketing strategy (Smith and Cooper-Martin 1997) with the BOP consumer clearly pointed out as a market segment carrying the potential to offer substantial profit opportunities for multinationals (Prahalad 2004). Targeting strategies for products that may cause economic, physical, or psychological harm have drawn considerable attention in marketing literature, particularly when focused on vulnerable consumers (Hill 2002; McDaniel, Kinney, and Chalip 2001; Nwachukwu, Vitell, Gilbert, and Barnes 1997). Consensus among researchers and practitioners indicates that though marketing harmful products to any consumer population is considered unethical, marketing harmful products to a vulnerable consumer group is even more unethical (Jones and Middleton 2006). Background on these key issues is outlined below.

Ethics in Targeting

In a marketplace transaction, in addition to the effect of an exchange on the primary transacting parties, there is a residual impact on the society surrounding the parties that carries ethical implications (Adler, Robinson, and Carlson 1981; Davidson 2003; Jacobson and Mazur 1995). Through the assessment of marketing’s social impact, both marketing practice and marketing ethics become interconnected (Smith and Quelch 1993, p. 14).

The term “marketing ethics” is defined as “the systematic study of how moral standards are applied to marketing decisions, behaviors and institutions” (Murphy, Laczniak, Bowie, and Klein 2005, p. xvii). The ethics of marketing practice have been categorized into two areas (Greenland 1974; Hise and McGinnis 1975): process and product. Process related ethical issues address the use of marketing tactics such as use of deceptive or misleading advertising, while product related issues center on marketing certain “harmful” products, such as tobacco, unhealthy food etc.

While many companies and industries such as telecommunications, FMCG and pharmaceuticals have been successful in gaining market share within this population (Karmachandani et al. 2011), there are few examples of profitable businesses that offer socially useful goods in the BOP market (Karmachandani, Kubzansky, and Frandano 2009; Karmachandani et al. 2011). There are also cases of companies that profit by specifically exploiting the poor through practices such as misleading sales promotion tactics, lack of fair pricing, deceptive advertising and the appropriateness and utility of the marketed products (Garrette and Karnani 2010).

Ethical Effects on the Non-Targeted Segment

The impact of targeted marketing to BOP consumers also goes beyond the targeted segment. The company’s or the brand’s image can be affected among a number of different parties including the media, special interest groups, public officials (Smith and Quelch 1993).

Equally important from a business perspective, research shows that marketers need to consider the effect of marketing on the non-target market segments (Grier and Brumbaugh 1999), as these consumers are also affected by the marketing message. Consumers have been shown to alter their brand perceptions and behavioral responses in a negative way when a company targets a vulnerable segment with a harmful product (Smith and Cooper-Martin 1997), or otherwise take action against companies they perceive as acting unethically (Brenkert 1998).

Vulnerable Segments

The Consumer vulnerability has been defined using a number of variables and concepts, ranging from physical and mental deficiencies (Morgan, Schuler, and Stoltman 1995), to demographic characteristics (Baker, Gentry et al. 2005), to systematic vulnerability (Commuri and Ekici 2008), to situational variables that may temporarily affect consumer judgment (Baker, Gentry, and Rittenburg 2005; Commuri and Ekici 2008).

Almost universally, key Individual characteristics that have been shown to affect a consumer’s level of vulnerability include demographic variables such as age, gender, race, domicile, ethnicity, income, and education (including literacy) (e.g., Smith and Cooper-Martin 1997; Jones and Middleton 2006; see Baker, Gentry et al. for a more
Vulnerable consumers are considered to have lower levels of “sophistication” (Morgan et al. 1995); these consumers lack the “skills, knowledge and attitudes that enable them to make efficient consumer decisions” (Jones and Middleton, p. 250, see also Hill 2002, and Nwachukwu et al. 1997).

This investigation focuses on measurable individual characteristics to determine vulnerability, specifically the targeted consumer’s level of income, and their level of formal education. These variables were chosen based on their universal usage in all definitions of consumer vulnerability, their ability to capture the primary definitional characteristics of this segment, and because of the ability to specifically define different levels of these variables for the survey respondents.

**Goods for BOP Consumers**

Researchers note the poor buy luxury items (Prahalad and Hammond 2002) and make purchases to fulfill higher order needs above and beyond their survival needs (Subrahmanyan and Gomez-Arias 2008) just like any other consumer. While this seems to contrast with the economic and demographic characteristics of the BOP segment, this spending pattern can be attributed to the concept of compensatory consumption (Caplovitz 1963; Gronmo 1988; Woodruffe 1997), where low income households in developing countries spend on socially visible products to compensate for their lack of status in society.

The most generic, and therefore the most inclusive, categorization of products and services can be found in the terms “basic” and “discretionary” (Jaiswal 2008). Basic items are those needed for survival, while discretionary items are those that are not needed for survival. In layman’s terms, basic items are “need to haves” while discretionary items are “nice to haves.” This paper uses the terminology of basic versus discretionary products and services in order to represent the differences between products and services offered to BOP consumers.

**HYPOTHESES**

In the most basic sense, targeting BOP consumers with FMCG’s in and of itself is not expected to be perceived as unethical by non-BOP consumer segments. In many cases, targeting BOP consumers with specific products can raise their standard of living and thus may have positive implications for the targeted group (Hahn 2009; Prahalad and Hammond 2002). The expectation is that consumers generally understand that companies will choose to do business on some level with low income, less educated consumers, and in many cases can provide useful products to an underserved segment.

Nor is it expected that marketing discretionary products in general will be universally perceived as unethical. Again, consumers are expected to recognize that much of their own and others’ consumption is in the discretionary goods category; this is a result of a combination of consumer demand and marketing-generated demand.

Rather, it is more likely that the combination of marketing discretionary products to BOP consumers will be perceived by non-BOP consumer segments as being ethically unsound. Further, it is expected that these non-BOP segments will be more likely to change their perceptions of the company and will alter their behavior with respect to the company when the company chooses to market discretionary products to consumers with low levels of income and education.

This presents a matrix of possible outcomes for companies targeting BOP consumers, with the expected outcomes outlined below in Figure 1.

**FIGURE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product Type</th>
<th>More Vulnerable</th>
<th>Segment Vulnerability</th>
<th>Less Vulnerable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>Marketing nutritionally fortified yogurt to BOP consumers.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Marketing nutritionally fortified yogurt to BOP consumers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discretionary</td>
<td>Marketing cosmetics to BOP consumers.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Marketing cosmetics to BOP consumers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
First, this analysis proposes to test the perception of targeting a vulnerable population in general, among members of a non-targeted consumer segment. To test the main effects of targeting a more versus less vulnerable population, the product type is held constant, and non-BOP consumers’ ethical evaluations of companies targeting each of these two groups of consumers are compared. The following results are expected:

H1: The ethical evaluation of company will be lower when target population is perceived as being vulnerable, and will be higher when the target population is not perceived as being vulnerable.

Research also demonstrates that consumers generate different ethical evaluations of products based on their categorization in terms of potential to do harm to the targeted consumer group. For example, Ringold (1995) argues that “acceptable” products targeted at consumer segments are generally viewed as beneficial, while products perceived as more harmful to the individual or to society provoke greater criticism. A number of other studies also address this issue in the realm of cigarettes, alcohol (e.g., Smith and Cooper-Martin 1997), and financial instruments (e.g., Braunsberger, Lucas, and Roach 2004).

In this analysis, it is expected that the discretionary (“more harmful”) products will be perceived as being less ethical than basic (“less harmful”) products by non-BOP consumers.

H2: The ethical evaluation of the company will be lower with when a company markets a discretionary product and will be higher when a company markets a basic product.

Additionally, this analysis argues that the ethical evaluation of a company’s targeting practices is not solely dependent on the selection of the target audience (more versus less vulnerable) or the product category (discretionary versus basic) alone. Targeting harmful products to vulnerable populations has been shown to generate negative publicity for the company marketing these products, and in some cases, in harmful litigation (Cui and Choudhury 2003). Research argues that the combination of consumer characteristics and the nature of the product targeted at this consumer are expected to affect ethical perceptions by the non-targeted segment (Cui and Choudhury 2003; Smith and Cooper-Martin 1997).

To measure this effect, both product type and segment vulnerability are varied to determine whether the combination of these two variables affects the non-BOP consumers’ ethical perceptions of the company. The effect should be most evident when targeting vulnerable consumers with discretionary rather than basic products.

H3a: A company targeting a discretionary product to a more vulnerable segment will receive lower ethical evaluations than a company targeting a basic product to a less vulnerable segment.

Conversely, consumers should have higher ethical evaluations of companies targeting basic rather than discretionary products to vulnerable consumers.

H3b: A company targeting a discretionary product to a more vulnerable segment will receive lower ethical evaluations than a company targeting a basic product to a more vulnerable segment.

Consumers should also have a higher ethical evaluation of the company marketing discretionary products to less vulnerable consumers than a company marketing discretionary products to more vulnerable consumers.

H3c: A company targeting a discretionary product to a more vulnerable segment will receive lower ethical evaluations than a company targeting a discretionary product to a less vulnerable segment.

Last, it is important to determine whether negative ethical evaluations of companies based on their marketing practices will increase the likelihood that consumers will take action against the company targeting BOP consumers. It is argued that a negative ethical evaluation of a company targeting BOP consumers (more vulnerable) will lead to an increased likelihood that a consumer will change their behaviors related to the company.

H4a (H4b): Intentions to engage in disapproving (approving) behaviors will be related negatively (positively) to the ethical evaluations that a strategy receives.

**PROPOSED METHOD**

These hypotheses will be tested in a between subjects experimental design that will differ by product type and consumer vulnerability. The design will be a 2 (basic/discretionary need) x 2 (high/low vulnerability) full factorial where each cell represented one of the four strategies as shown in Figure 1. Consumer vulnerability will include two target characteristics (e.g., income, education) and two product types (e.g., skin whitening cream,
fortified yogurt). This will create a total of 4 scenarios in the study. The study will be conducted among non-BOP consumers in India.

A pretest will be conducted to confirm the manipulation check for consumer vulnerability and product type. To conduct a manipulation check for consumer vulnerability, a group of non-BOP consumers will be asked to indicate their perception of consumer vulnerability of a particular population. Each consumer profile will be manipulated to illustrate relevant levels of education and income in India. In addition, the same sample will indicate whether the products such as toothpaste, detergent, shampoo, skin whitening cream, fortified yogurt, and antibacterial bar soap are considered basic or discretionary. These products and target descriptors (income and education) were chosen from those that have been cited in the BOP literature.

The research will be conducted in India for two reasons. First, the country has occupied center stage in the extant literature in the BOP with a large numbers of success stories (Prahalad 2004; Prahalad and Hammond 2002). Second, India has a BOP population (those with annual incomes below US$ 3,000 in local purchasing power) of nearly 925 million, the largest in the world (Hammond et al. 2007). With its large BOP population, India carries the potential to become one of the most profitable BOP markets in the world, thereby making a compelling case for companies interested in tapping the purchasing power at the bottom of the economic pyramid.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

BOP consumer vulnerability will be operationalized as a combination of demographic characteristics (income and education) generally perceived to limit the consumer’s ability to maximize utility and well-being in economic transactions. Product type will be operationalized as a product attribute perceived to fulfill a basic or discretionary need. The same products will be used across all four strategies to prevent variations between product classes from affecting results. All brand names will be avoided to prevent influence from previously held opinions.

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Ethical Evaluations

To measure the ethical evaluation of the scenarios, Reidenbach and Robin’s (1990) multi-dimensional ethics scale (MES) was adopted. Strong support for reliability and validity of the scale exists in literature (with Cronbach alphas of 0.71 to 0.92) for each of the three MES subscales (Reidenbach and Robin 1990; Reidenbach, Robin, and Dawson 1991; Smith and Cooper-Martin 1997; Jones and Middleton 2007). The measure-ment scale is widely used to measure ethical judgments (e.g., Smith and Cooper-Martin 1997; Jones and Middleton 2007). The scale instructions will be modified to explain the terms “unspoken promise” and “unwritten contract,” as done in the study in Smith and Cooper-Martin (1997).

The three dimensions or subscales are: moral equity, relativistic and contractualism. The moral equity dimension “relies heavily on lessons from our early training that we receive in the home regarding fairness, right and wrong as communicated through childhood lessons of sharing, religious training, morals from fairy tales, and fables” (Reidenbach and Robin 1990, p. 646). The relativism dimension is “more concerned with the guidelines, requirements, and parameters inherent in the social/cultural system than with individual considerations” (1990, p. 646). The contractualism dimension represents the social contract between business and society (Donaldson and Dunfee 1994). Study results for each dimension will provide further insight into the rationale for the resultant ethical judgment. In addition, open ended questions will be provided to study respondents to explain their position or opinion that simply asks, “Why in your view is the above evaluation is correct?”

Behavioral Intentions

The second dependent variable will measure the likelihood of performing each of five disapproving behaviors (e.g., stop buying the company’s products) and two approving behaviors (e.g., tell friends to buy the company’s products). The items were adopted from the Smith and Cooper-Martin (1997) study. One disapproving behavior will be modified to fit the context of consumer activism in India. An open ended question will provide the respondent to suggest other behaviors that he might engage in indicate his or her dis/approval of the company and support the above suggested action.

Sample and Procedure

To test the hypotheses, an internet based survey will be administered. An online sample will be recruited from an internet panel owned by a private marketing research company. Subjects will be invited to participate through email which provided a link to the web survey. The subjects will represent the general population contributing to the external validity of the study results.
No specific consumer criteria will be used to recruit the sample. Each subject will read one scenario (randomly assigned) and then answer the items for ethical evaluation followed by those for disapproving and approving behaviors (in a random order). Each scenario will include a target description in terms of both a low or high level of consumer vulnerability traits (education and income) and a product identified as either basic or discretionary.

Next, respondents will answer the manipulation checks for perceived product harmfulness (three items) and perceived target vulnerability (two items). In order to assess the respondents’ comfort level with taking an online survey, each will rate his or her technical proficiency with a computer (1 = Not very proficient, 7 = Very proficient) and also report the number of hours per week spent online, either for work or personal use. Last, they will answer demographic questions.

**CONTRIBUTION**

Results from this study are expected to produce tangible evidence for a debate on the ethics of marketing to the BOP that has been ongoing in the marketing literature. Both Davidson (2009) and Karnani (2007) have argued against the exploitation of the BOP consumers by marketers in pursuit of the fortune at the bottom of the pyramid (Prahalad 2004). However, to date no empirical results have been presented that measure the views of the public or other stakeholder groups’ views on this issue. This study will therefore offer empirical evidence to concerned groups over the ethics of targeting the BOP consumer by examining both the issues of product need for the BOP consumer and the perception of consumer vulnerability that highlights the role of targeting strategy in potential exploitation.

Though marketing managers are expected to care about the ethics of doing business with the BOP segment, results from this study that point to the expected approving and disapproving behaviors will carry a greater impact in influencing marketing choices. If results show the lack of consumer support for a company that receives a weaker ethical evaluation either due to the inappropriateness of the product or due to target vulnerability, pursuing a similar strategy in the marketplace could present a publicity nightmare for companies in the form of negative brand associations or a potential consumer boycott. Therefore, a priori knowledge about the implications of a weaker ethical evaluation might motivate the company to take a proactive stance to avoid any undesirable publicity in the future. Additional results could also provide an insight into the demographic profile of the public who are more likely to punish a company that receives a less desirable ethical evaluation. Overall, the study will help marketers understand public perceptions of targeting the BOP market with a basic versus discretionary product to a potentially vulnerable consumer group.

For public policy makers, the results of this study will provide preliminary evidence to ascertain the degree of exploitation of the BOP consumer. Though Prahalad (2004) argues that BOP consumers are aspirational and do spend on luxury products like their middle class counterparts in the society, it is important that public policy makers examine the need for restricting targeting. This might translate into either restriction on marketing tactics, and/or the inclusion of public service announcements that increase the level of awareness among BOP consumers to increase the likelihood of making an informed purchase decision. Often, the view of imposing restrictions on targeting of vulnerable consumers is disputed by industry representatives who point that it is paternalistic (Smith and Cooper-Martin 1997) and the government intervention that would restrict consumer choices for vulnerable groups might be too imperialistic or elitist in nature (Sowell 1981). This study will measure perceived consumer vulnerability of the BOP market which could justify any public policy intervention. Further, results may provide support for policy makers to identify a mechanism to measure actual vulnerability of the BOP consumer.

For theorists, the results of this study will shed light on the ethics of marketing to the BOP in the emerging markets. Significant attention in both marketing literature and business press has pointed out the attractiveness of the BOP market as an opportunity for future growth. However, the BOP market both exists in the urban and rural areas. In a preliminary study of the BOP market in India (Gupta and Jaiswal 2011), study results show that unlike the urban BOP consumers (who lives in a large metropolitan city), rural BOP consumers in India lacked the ability to understand the promotional offers advertised on product packages and as a result were often exploited by the rural retailers who would withhold the bonus or the promotional offer and sell it for additional revenue. Therefore, it is important that marketing researchers conduct research to understand the nature of the BOP market and draw out similarities and dissimilarities between the urban and rural counterparts. Such research would then suggest that there might be two BOP markets with different customer value frameworks instead of the one unified approach as suggested by Prahalad (2004).
Overall, the concept of targeting raises serious ethical concerns when perceived by the public as one that hinges on the issues of product need and consumer vulnerability. Previous research has shown that when the public perceives any level of exploitation associated with the marketing of a discretionary product, there is some likelihood for disapproving behaviors to occur, especially if the target group is viewed as being vulnerable. This paper will further explore this premise, adding to the developing literature in this important research domain.

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A RACE TO THE BOTTOM? CONSUMER RESPONSES TO HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE

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SUMMARY

In today’s competitive environment, firms must consider the social impact of their actions. Corporate actions and activities that are voluntarily taken to improve social conditions of the business environment related to perceived societal or stakeholder obligations are collectively defined as corporate social responsibility (CSR; Sen and Bhattacharya 2001). Although some extant research suggests that companies may do well by doing good (Waddock and Smith 2000; Luo and Bhattacharya 2006), other scholars argue that the link between CSR and performance is tenuous (Margolis and Walsh 2003) and is mediated by factors that are loosely related to CSR, such as innovation (McWilliams and Siegel 2000). As a result, the impact of CSR on firm performance remains a focal point of practitioner and scholar interest.

Grounded in the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM; Petty and Cacioppo 1979, 1986a, 1986b), this study takes an experimental approach to examine the role of multidimensionality in CSR rating and its impact on brand equity and two measures of purchasing behavior. In the context of the apparel industry, we find that the human rights sub-dimension of CSR has a unique impact on measured outcomes relative to an overall CSR rating. Further, experimental evidence demonstrates that the path of CSR performance to consumer behavior is mediated by CSR’s impact on brand equity. As a result, the following three relationships are hypothesized: (1) A low human rights rating for an apparel firm will result in unfavorable consumer responses as measured by purchase intentions (PI), willingness to pay (WTP), and perceived brand equity (BE). (2) Human rights consciousness (HRC) moderates the relationship between the human rights rating and consumer reactions such that higher HRC results in increasingly unfavorable consumer reactions as measured by purchase intention, willingness to pay, and perceived brand equity. (3) Brand equity mediates the moderating effect of HRC on human rights rating and consumer response.

Because our hypotheses include both a moderator and mediator, we specifically utilize the framework established by Muller, Judd, and Yzerbyt (2005) for testing mediator-moderator interactions. For all models, HRC is measured by asking respondents to manually rank human rights among other CSR dimensions including: community, diversity, employee relations, and environment. These are also the same primary dimensions of CSR included in the ubiquitous KLD index as used in current CSR literature. The respondents’ rankings were then coded into HR_Score, where a higher value equates to greater HRC. PI and WTP are the dependent variables used to measure consumer response and our two manipulated conditions are coded as binary variables, CSR (overall CSR performance) and HR (human rights CSR performance).

Results are largely supportive of our hypotheses. Our first regression model introduced all demographic and experimental conditions as well as control variables as a baseline measure. Thirty-six percent and 42 percent of the variances in PI and WTP, respectively, were explained. Next, controlling for our experimental condition with overall CSR performance, a low rating for HR indicated that regardless of whether a firm has a high or low overall CSR rating, having a low human rights rating resulted in decreases to both PI (β = -1.82, p < 0.01) and WTP (β = -14.03, p < 0.01). These results suggest that in the apparel industry, ethical labor influences purchasing intention beyond the effects of a firm’s overall CSR rating. In our next model, we introduced our hypothesized moderator. Our interaction term (HR_Score x HR) was highly significant for all three dependent variables: PI (β = -1.01, p < 0.01), WTP (β = -6.09, p < 0.01), and BE (β = -1.00, p < 0.01). In other words, respondents with a high level of HRC had greater negative response to a low HR rating for the apparel company as measured by purchase intention, willingness to pay, and brand equity. In addition, the BE path serves as “path a” in establishing a mediation effect (Baron and Kenny 1986). In our last model, we introduce the mediator BE and the BE x HR_Score interaction term. For PI, the HR_Score x HR moderation effect becomes insignificant from model 2 (β = -1.01, p < 0.01) to model 3 (β = -0.12, p > 0.10). For WTP, the effect is greatly reduced from model 2 (β = -6.09, p < 0.01), and becomes marginally significant in model 3 (β = -2.23, p > 0.05). Thus, BE fully mediates the moderation effect of HR.
Score x HR on PI, while partially mediates it for WTP. Sobel test further confirms the observed mediation effects.

Although the linkage between CSR and profitability has been under question, this article provides evidence that consumers have higher purchase intentions and are willing to pay more for products that are more ethically manufactured. This finding also serves to temper conclusions reached in prior research that suggests a uniform reaction to changes in CSR performance. As our results indicate, the effects of a low overall CSR performance score can be diluted for those consumers who are more sensitive to the human rights aspects of product manufacturing and value a high HR CSR performance rating. Brand equity’s mediation effect on both purchase intention and willingness to pay indicates that CSR initiatives can represent a robust public relations strategy, particularly to those with strong social concerns. The notion of “race to the bottom” thereby can hurt companies due to consumer backlash. If apparel firms successfully communicate and emphasize their ethical labor practices to consumers – through promotion, self-publication, or as evaluated by independent press – they may indeed prove that companies may do well by doing good. References are available upon request.

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JUGAAD – GROWING FROM “MAKING DO” AND “QUICK FIX” TO INNOVATIVE SUSTAINABLE AND LOW-COST SURVIVAL STRATEGIES AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PYRAMID

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SUMMARY

Purpose

The term jugaad has its origin to India’s low cost locally-made vehicles plying without a license and are used as a mean of transportation in the rural India constructed using local and low-cost resources indigenously. The word jugaad has also developed an alternate meaning for low level, border line criminal activity in the informal economy (Thomas 2011). Today, the term jugaad refers to local and low-cost innovative solutions, going beyond the “quick fix” or “making do” arrangements that it originally referred to. The jugaad is part and parcel of India’s “infrastructure deficit” (Sharma 2009). Jugaad has now grown in the business and management literature to refer to as innate, grass root level innovations aroused due limited access to capital, resources, and infrastructure. In this paper, the concept of Jugaad is extended from being not only a way of “making do” but a methodology that has emerged as a way of survival. A movement has emerged that attempts to rebrand, or recast, these practices as innate, “grassroots” innovations (Mitra 2006 p. 40). Jugaad facilitates innovations that are faster, cheaper, highly adaptable and sustainable at the families at the bottom of pyramid (Prahalad 2005). For the purpose of this study, we define jugaad as “Low-cost sustainable innovation in process, products, and/or services done locally, and with a strategic intent/purpose.”

The World Development Report (2001, p. vi) points out that at Y2K a full 4 billion of these individuals were consigned to what Prahalad (2005) has called the “bottom of the pyramid” (BOP). Of these, 2.8 billion lived on between $1 and $2 a day, and another 1.2 billion on less than$1 a day (Chakravarti 2006). People at BOP are generally characterized by their low income, low literacy, low skills, limited infrastructure, limited resources and less freedom. A principal problem facing BOP consumers is lack of access to essential goods and services, due to unavailability (Prahalad 2005) and/or non-affordability (Karnani 2007). One of the most comprehensive and in-depth studies that quantifies expenditures and spending among the world’s poor is that by Hammond et al. (2007), a co-publication by the World Resources Institute and the International Finance Corporation (WRI and IFC). According to this study, BOP is estimated to have four billion people with incomes below $3,000 per annum in local purchasing power. These people at the BOP do not have the sufficient resources and infrastructures required for a standard livelihood and thus are forced to opt for the jugaad ways of systematic developments to fulfill their basic needs.

Research Methodology

The paper reports analysis, based on in-depth interviews with customers and producers at BOP in different localities in the city of Kolkata in India. Structured questionnaires persisting to various aspects of jugaad at BOP, was framed to collect the responses. The questionnaire was subjective and was not directly filled by the respondents due to the literacy limitations at the BOP. Interviews were also complimented with distant observations to add richness in the data covering various sectors where jugaad survives at BOP. Some audio recordings were also done for different areas of BOP population in Kolkata, such as Joka, Thakurpukur, Behala, Golfgreen, Chowrasta. Fifteen families at BOP were interviewed with questions pertaining to the various aspects of jugaad. Ten questionnaires were found to be incomplete due to lack of understanding at the BOP. Only five responses for every aspect were found usable.

Data Analysis and Results

On basis of the data collected and the results obtained, paper discusses the various qualitative and quantitative jugaads involved at BOP in various sectors such as food, housing, Energy, transportation, water, health etc. along with a description of the four basic kinds of street entrepreneurships in India catering to a huge market at the
BOP. It includes “Cubical Retailers,” “Marketer on Foot,” “Business on wheels,” “Head and Shoulder” retailing.

Jugaad in Food at BOP varies qualitatively as well as quantitatively. We explored this sector at BOP from a consumer’s as well as the retailer’s point of view. The next major sector involving jugaad at the BOP corresponds to jugaad in housing. Houses at BOP are commonly referred to as Kutch houses because of their strength and structure. Research reveals four different types of housings common at the BOP level. A comparison of the cost estimates for sample housing of each type is also tabulated in the paper.

Some other common jugaads at the BOP level involves jugaad in cooking stoves (Chulhas), cooking fuels and transportation jugaad vehicles observed in the energy and transportation sectors at the BOP. According to the WRI-IFC report, BOP accounts for over 60 percent of the total Asian transportation market. Those in rural areas have fewer options such as walking, bicycling, animal-drawn carts, infrequent, or expensive buses and trains (Subramanayan 2008) and therefore opt for the jugaad methods.

Health at BOP engages jugaad in the managing health services in hospitals, with limited access to public health services. Spending on health care is low as the poor often cannot afford it. The prevalence of curative care services is also higher than preventive services. For rural BOP, hospitals and health clinics tend to be far away further compounding the problem (Subramanian 2008). The paper finally discusses jugaad in the usage and storage of water in the BOP communities.

Managerial Implications and Conclusions

The study shows that jugaads like those discussed on the paper, are not just a way of doing things in a quick-fix manner, but comprises of an entire schemata of coping and surviving in daily lives, as a strategy at the BOP. The paper confirms the notion that a person at the BOP has to struggle his entire life and is left with no other option but to opt for such jugaads that are although not sustainable in long-term, but are a surer way to earn them a livelihood. Also some of them lead to an unethical and illegal way of living and it is the duty of the society and its stakeholders including organizations to take immediate remedial steps so that the people at the BOP are provided with better lives, by including them in markets, so that they can increase their well-being. Managers can, for example, tailor their offering more on lines of processes used by BOP constituents in managing jugaads in their daily lives, to which they are habituated. Those offering that fit with the jugaad way of life, will seemingly find more acceptability with BOP customers, be it energy, bed, clothing, food, or street entrepreneurship. Managers of the companies can explore the various aspects mentioned in the paper and provide better offerings for the families at BOP, be it qualitative or quantitative. More the offerings are similar to jugaad way of life at BOP; the more will be the acceptability of the offerings, leading to higher adoption levels. References are available upon request.

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FALSE ADVERTISEMENTS, EXTERNALITIES, AND THE REGULATION OF FALSE ADVERTISING: A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies false advertisements, externalities caused by false ads, and cost structure that may moderate the level of false ads. By using regulation theory, this study also discusses effective regulations of false advertising.

INTRODUCTION

This paper studies false advertisements and discusses effective regulations of false advertising. This study discusses externalities caused by false ads and also explores several factors such as cost structure that may affect the level of false ads and effective regulation. The paper first introduces crucial constructs for the study of false advertising and regulations over it. Second, as the major contribution to the field, the paper details externalities generated by false advertising. Third, the paper examines how cost structures affect false advertising. The paper then outlines strategies of effectively regulating false advertising. Finally, the paper discusses research and managerial implications.

SOME KEY CONSTRUCTS

The study first defines some essential constructs for further analysis of false advertising and the regulation of it.

Firms

Firms refer to economic organizations that internalize uncertainties of economic transactions to earn profit. At least three types of firms are involved in advertising: manufacturing firms, advertising agencies, and retailing firms. Unless specified, in this study firm incorporates all three types that supplies goods or services to consumers. In this study, I may interchangeably use “sellers” to refer to firms. Moreover, firms’ behaviors may be shaped by different market structures such as competitive market or monopolized market.

False Advertisement (FA)

Previous studies perceive false advertising contains three essential elements: fraud, deception, and misleading (Gardner 1975; Russo et al. 1981; Gao 2008). This study outlines a variety of concepts or ad forms that closely related with false ads. For example, sellers may mislead or misinform consumers by using host selling (Shanahan and Hyman 2001), hidden fees and surcharges, “going out of business” sales, manipulation of standards, oversized packaging, ambiguous terms, and incomplete or misleading labeling. Sellers may also use humors to mask deceptive information in ads (Matter 2007).

Although it may be difficult to get a consensus among business educators, firms, or legal professionals in defining what is deceptive or false advertising (Hyman 1991, 2009), this paper still tries to define FA as ads which are intentionally supplied by sellers to deceive consumers or ads with incomplete information which may unintentionally mislead consumers. Whatever the forms are, in general false ads often affect consumers’ behaviors through two mechanisms. First, the ad claim per se affects consumers’ beliefs. Second, the ad claim implies something else that affects beliefs (Terence and Preston 1981). Finally, not all false ads are illegal and will illicit legal enforcement actions (Reichman and Cannady 2002). However, the main purpose of using false ads is to motivate consumers to buy something that they do not really need or buy something at a higher cost than it really should be. This implies that consumers’ welfare may be undermined if there is no outside intervention. This paper hence proposes that:

Proposition 1: Sellers of low-quality products have the motivation to exaggerate product quality, aiming to reap the temporarily higher profits.

Asymmetric Information

Asymmetric information refers to an information gap between sellers and buyers (Akerlof 1974). In this study we posit that sellers have more knowledge of the real ads content than consumers, implying firms may have more power in manipulating ad contents. Another implication of asymmetric information is that acquiring information will induce searching cost for consumers which mainly include the cost in searching and analyzing needed information. For example, consumers may have more information in search goods than that in credence and experience,
implying that consumers may spend more resources in searching search goods than the other two goods (Nelson 1970, 1974, 1975). The policy implication of asymmetric information and false ads is that when it is so costly for consumers to differentiate true contents from false information, government regulation is necessary.

**Externalities**

Standard definition of externality in economics refers to outcomes of economic transactions with some of the values that are not counted in such transactions (Cornes and Sandler 1986; Caporaso and Levine 1992). Conventional business studies define externalities as some unexpected results from business transactions (Mazis et al. 1981). This study defines externalities as results that are not intended by neither parts involved in advertising activities and the value of which are not incorporated in any direct outcome related with advertising. In some senses, we may perceive externalities as side-products of advertising. Externalities can be positive, which means bring positive values to the third party beyond ads; and they can be negative which means losses to the third part. In this study, we argue that false ads may bring a variety of externalities on targets beyond consumers and sellers.

**EXTERNALITIES GENERATED BY FALSE ADVERTISING**

Advertising, false or not, may generate externalities (Figure 1). As some studies on online ads show that if a user finds the ads displayed on a website helpful, she is more likely to click the website in the future (Ghosh and Mahdian 2008). But if she finds ads posted on this website not helpful, she will less likely to click this website in the future.

Advertising can create externalities on commodities. Ads on one commodity may cause externalities on other ads because consumers’ attentional resources are limited and the increasing attention to one ad leads to the decreased attention to other ads (Muller and Kruger 2007). Some sellers may benefit from the free rider effect when other sellers invested in advertising the same or similar goods (Comanor and Wilson 1974; Becker and Murphy 1993; Bagwell 2005). Sometimes, ads by other sellers may bring negative externalities. For example, common pool effect of false or low quality advertising of some firms in the industry may lead to the overall degrading of the average quality of ads. In addition, as Obermiller and Spangenberg (1998) note, consumers may increase their skepticism to the overall advertising if they think they were deceived by one false advertisement. This mentality has been also supported by psychological experiments (Ortmann and Hertwig 2002). The defensive reaction of consumers means that some benefits of advertising may be neglected by consumers, leading to the loss of business welfare and resources (Darke and Ritchie 2007).

Advertising may give rise to longitudinal externalities, positive or negative. For example, if consumers can find preferred information from an advertiser, they will be...
more likely to seek information from the same advertiser in the future. As for negative longitudinal externality, it means consumers are deeply attracted by the extant ads and are less likely to advocate new ads proposed by the same advertiser. Thus, a good ad offered at present will inhibit the development of similar ads in the future. For the same reason, it is also understandable that if consumers do not accept the extant ads they may not accept similar ads from the same seller in the future. In addition, too much ads will decrease potential consumers’ attention to this brand or product in the future because consumers have been satiated of ads information already.

Advertising may cause externalities across attributes. This type of “hate me hate my dog” externality refers to the impacts from one attribute to other attributes. Features of ads may affect each other. The two similar ads, for example, are going to exert negative externalities on each other because they are competing for limited media space or consumers’ attention. Indeed, there is a cross-priming mechanism exist across various commodity attributes. For example, the attribute price may exert spill-over effect on non-price attributes and vice versa (Haefner and Permut 1974). When consumers think the price rational they may also be more likely to accept other attributes such as color, design, and smell of the commodity. In contrast, when consumers think the design of the commodity is inappropriate, they may also find the price unacceptable. In other cases, consumers’ like or dislike one type of ads may also extend the perception to similar brands whether from the same advertiser or other advertisers (Darke and Ritchie 2007). By the same token, when consumers find they are deceived by a false advertisement, they will extend the suspicion to other ads even if these ads have no connection with the false ads. The final result is that advertisers are discouraged to provide ads with truthfulness and superior quality. The Gresham scenario is that the entire market system will be finally undermined especially when low-quality goods producers are more eagerly than others to advertise (Stigler 1961; Darke and Ritchie 2007; Pastine et al. 2010).

In addition, false advertising may generate externalities on the society through ethical and economic influences. Ads contents may form a popular culture that influences ethical judgment of social members even if the ads are not intended to deceive (Carson et al. 1985; Taylor 2006). Over-advertising or under-advertising will put social welfare under the optimal level. Moreover, too much ads may induce consumers escape from choices which means the waste of resources of the society (Pastine et al. 2010, p. 50).

Finally, the regulation of false advertising may also generate externalities on the seller, consumers, and other actors, of which will be outlined later.

**COST STRUCTURE AND FALSE ADVERTISING**

Indeed, the real effect of such externalities on stakeholders may be moderated by many factors such as cost structure related with producing, proposing, and regulation of false ads (Figure 2).
When a company has a high fixed specific cost in a product it will be less likely for it to act opportunistically because it is impossible for the firm to compensate the possible loss from cheating. Such particular cost is often perceived as an unsalvageable deposit of punishing the contract violators. In contrast, when a firm has a low cost to be transferred for other uses, the firm may more likely to act opportunistically after the contract. Following this logic, if the firm has a high stake related with advocating its products or brands, then the firm will be less likely in proposing false advertisements in case the potential punishment will be costly.

Advertising may create an inverse-U shaped effect of scale economy. First, advertising helps to increase economy scale because of the increasing marginal effectiveness of ads and the decreasing advertising expenditures per message sent (Bagwell 2005, p. 33). Second, after a threshold of ads intensity, the marginal effectiveness of ads may decrease and the marginal cost of sending such ads will increase. The effectiveness of false ads also follows the same pattern with an increasing effect of false ads first and then a decreasing influence per unit of false ads sent.

High cost of advertising may create entry barriers for new comers if high prevailing levels of advertising generate additional cost for new entrants. The logic is that new ads are designed to switch consumers from incumbent firms or well-established brands if an ad economy scale exist (Bagwell 2005, pp. 13–14). This effect helps extant firms set prices above costs and is anti-competitive. It is true that false ads may not necessarily cause lower cost than truthful ads. However, false ads may bring higher net benefits than true ads do, especially when a large volume of previously unwanted purchases are motivated by false ads. Hence, some firms will have the intention to provide false ads even if the induced benefits are only for a short period.

The purchasing cost may also shape consumers’ responses to false advertising. Generally measured by provision cost, goods can be classified as durable and non-durable goods (Nelson 1970, 1974). It has been assumed that non-durable goods are often cheaper than durable goods and the general loss for consumers to buy these inexpensive goods would be little and the regulation is hence not so urgent (Rubin 1999). The main reason is because the durable goods may have a higher producing and maintenance cost than those of non-durable goods. It is also assumed that the expenditure on durable goods constitutes a high percentage on consumers’ income. We want to question the rationales of such arguments. First, for some consumers with very low income, the cost of buying non-durable goods may still mean a lot to them. Second, if non-durable goods are sold to a wide number of consumers, then the aggregate loss of consumers in the market will still be huge. Thus, we believe that the regulation of false ads on inexpensive goods may still be necessary.

Non-durable goods often engender low cost for consumers to use or own, while durable goods are high-priced infrequently purchased goods such as cars and TVs. Durable goods may induce higher consumer involvement than nondurable goods do, since consumers may have higher stake in buying durable goods. When consumers want to purchase durable goods they are more likely to invest some resources to search the appropriate brands to reduce possible losses, which incurs search cost. As long as the search cost is less than the potential loss by purchasing a wrong product, rational consumers will search until they think that acquired information is sufficient for making wise purchasing decisions. Thus, ads for durable goods will mainly play informative role for consumers. Incorporating costs in consumers’ purchasing decision:

**Proposition 2**: The higher the purchasing cost for consumers to buy the product, the more likely the seller will pay attention to consumers’ responses and the less likely for the firm to intentionally provide false advertisements of the product to consumers.

The rationale is that since consumers are meticulous in searching high cost goods, it will be difficult for deceptive advertising of durable goods to mislead consumers. Thus, the best policy for the seller is to not provide false ads of high stake goods to consumers.

**EFFECTIVELY REGULATING FALSE ADVERTISING**

Regulation generally means to set up rules, norms, or laws to define dos and don’ts of some behaviors of individuals and firms. Regulation is necessary when the market cannot voluntarily and efficiently adjust some negative results from commercial behaviors (Eisner 2000). When asymmetric information is severe between buyers and sellers, effective regulation is necessary to maintain the operation of the market, consumer autonomy or to protect net welfare of the society (Taylor 2006).

Although the origin of regulating false advertising can be generally classified into three sources—consumers, firms, and government agencies, in different countries the sources may vary. In the U.S., for example, there are at least five sources: the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), other federal agencies such as the Food and Drug Administration...
Regulation defines the scope of false advertising and designs rules or laws to prevent or punish the commitment of false advertising. In fact, there is no need of government intervention if at least three conditions are met: property rights and responsibilities of advocating false ads are well-defined, sellers and consumers act rationally, and transaction costs of removing the externalities are minimal. That means consumers and sellers can decide compensation among themselves. However, in most cases, the three conditions cannot be fully met, and especially it will be disadvantaged for widely dispersed consumers to negotiate with well-organized sellers. Thus, government regulation is necessary to limit false advertising.

According to George Stigler, the state may regulate economic behaviors in at least four ways (Stigler 1971, pp. 116–119): a direct subsidy of money, the control of entry by new rivals, using the power to affect substitutes and complements, and price-fixing. In regulating false ads, the state may directly and/or indirectly shape economic transactions in three major ways. First, the state may design rules and laws to regulate the intensity and content of ads. Second, the state may design specific standards to control ads. Third, the state may assign agencies to punish those that violated ads regulations.

Although it is believed that regulation will cause more problems than it solves (Mises 1934), if regulation of false ads is well designed and implemented it may at least partially control false advertising by increasing the potential cost and decreasing possible benefits of perpetrating sellers (Becker 1968; Darke et al. 2008; Tipton et al. 2009).

Regulating false advertising may also generate some externalities. As Nelson argued, ads can be a source of information (Nelson 1974). Hence, when regulation of ads are poorly designed and/or badly implemented, some negative externalities may also emerge. First, the stopping of some seemingly deceptive but actually true ads may make average prices above the equilibrium level (Ekelund and Saurman 1988; Rubin 1999). Second, having multiple regulators is likely to lead to more restrictions of advertising than is appropriate (Beales and Muris 1993). Third, the regulation of reference prices may undermine consumers’ ability to compare prices and qualities when the information role of advertising is distorted by regulation. Fourth, the regulation of the seller with false advertising may negatively affect investors’ perception of and hence the average returns of the seller in the future (Darke et al. 2008; Tipton et al. 2009; Wiles et al. 2010). Moreover, it has also been studied that states which permit advertising for particular goods have lower prices than states which ban the advertising (Benham 1972). Hence, if regulation disallowed ads in industries that are easily to mislead consumers, the average prices of products in this industry will increase. Finally, since regulation also generates cost, it is often difficult to fully implement the regulation. But partial enforcement of regulation may relax consumers’ normal skepticism and hence make them more likely to be victims of false advertising in the future (Rubin 1999).

RESEARCH AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This study explores goods types, asymmetric information between sellers and buyers, externalities related with false ads, and the rationales to regulate false advertising. This study tries to pave a way to study the effective regulation of false advertising and their often neglected externalities from a comprehensive perspective.

The managerial implication is for sellers to increase the effectiveness of advertising they should try to reduce information gap between sellers and buyers. Brand identity and consumer loyalty building may be an effective way for consumers to know more about the ads. Educating consumers may also be crucial for increasing consumer trust.

For consumers, information is good. However, consumers must balance the cost and benefits of acquiring such information that improve their purchasing decision. As for effective regulation, the government should be more careful of regulating those false ads that are more likely to happen in industries such as credence goods and monopolized products where advertised attributes are easily confuse consumers. We also suggest regulators to enhance the intensity of competition among firms in order to get more comparable information to set unambiguous rules and laws to control false ads. In addition, we encourage regulators try every viable means to increase potential cost and decrease potential return of false advertising.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper conceptually explores false advertising and the regulation of it. The study examines externalities caused by false advertisements and discusses ways to reduce false...
advertising. The paper argues that false advertising not only undermines consumers’ interests, it may also generate negative spill-over effects on competing firms and the society. To effectively reduce false advertising, we must consider some key factors, one of which is cost structure of firms and/or consumers. Finally, the study discusses research and managerial implications of regulating false advertising.

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THE CONTINUING EVOLUTION OF TRADEMARK INFRINGEMENT ONLINE

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SUMMARY

Trademark in the United States is generally considered a form of consumer protection, traditionally manifested in the form of a name, logo or symbol that distinctively identifies a company as the originator of a product or service. Congress originally framed the discussion of trademark policy around informing and protecting consumers: by providing limited legal protection for the somewhat exclusive use of a trademark, a company can associate itself with a trademark, one that consumers can rely on to know the origin of a product or service within a certain market. Consumers can then generally rely on this association that ties a mark and a company together such that when they buy or use a product with a given name, they will not be confused about who created it. The rapid growth of the internet in the last decade has introduced new issues surrounding trademark protection. This paper addresses recent issues in the context of branding and trademark in the online environment and the implications of this dynamic environment as related to consumers, brand owners and public policy makers.

New technologies and tools that are now commonly used as components of the internet include domain names, metatags, and social media. All of these present evolving contexts for the potential for trademark infringement.

Domain names (e.g., “marketingpower.org”) are the unique identifiers that people depend on to connect to web pages, send e-mail, and use other Internet resources. As with branding in a competitive market, it is necessary to prevent two individuals from using an identical domain name and to enforce this uniqueness. The growth of the internet, coupled with rapid domain name acquisitions, have led to disputes over attractive domain names, particularly domain names containing the .com, or “generic Top Level Domain” (gTLD), suffix. ICANN, a global administrative organization in charge of the Domain Name System (DNS), has recently elected to shift toward “open” gTLDs – essentially removing most restrictions and allowing companies to use their brands as top-level domain suffixes (e.g., “.walmart,” “.butterball”). In theory, this expansion of the gTLDs will allow for more innovation, choice and change to the Internet’s addressing system. Critics of the expansion, such as the Association of National Advertisers (ANA), fear gTLD expansion will lead to an increase in intellectual property misconduct and diminish the strength of trademarks “to serve as strong, accurate and reliable symbols of source and quality in the marketplace” (Liodice 2011).

Cybersquatting occurs when “a person other than the trademark holder registers the domain name of a well-known trademark and then attempts to profit from this by either ransoming the domain name back to the trademark holder or by using the domain name to divert business from the trademark holder to the domain name holder” (DaimlerChrysler v. The Net 2004). Federal law in the United States specifically prohibits cybersquatting in the United States, but it persists as the most common form of online trademark infringement and remains difficult to combat. As with other internet activities, the global reach of cybersquatting has proved difficult to contain within individual country borders. ICANN, however, has adopted the Uniform Domain Name Resolution Process (UDRP) as an administrative, in contrast to regulatory, mechanism for determining domain name ownership. There are limitations to the effectiveness of either legal or administrative processes.

The legal version of domain name monetization or “domain parking” consists of registering generic or non-trademarked terms, such as “microbrews.com,” but posting no original content on the site. Domain parking becomes illegal, however, when it parallels a version of traditional cybersquatting whereby domain name speculators register domain names that contain trademarks or typographical errors (e.g., “coorsmicrobrews.com”) and leave the websites idle to generate revenue from pay-per-click advertising. For trademark owners, both illegal and legal versions of domain parking pose distinct threats of trademark infringement, monetary losses and brand devaluation.

Metatags are key words that are included in the code for a website. Metatags are not visible on websites, much like the formatting information that puts spaces between the words of this sentence is not visible to the reader. However, metatags are read by Internet search engines, and are included by programmers as a way to help search engines
find sites that match a consumer’s search terms. The purpose of the improper use of metatags is to draw traffic to one’s site by essentially confusing the identities of the source of the site. Courts have identified this misdirection as “initial interest confusion,” whereby a consumer is briefly diverted to a competitor’s product when that competitor uses another’s trademark. This confusion is inferred to exist, regardless of whether an actual purchase is affected.

The term “Web 2.0” generally refers to the second generation of the World Wide Web, but more specifically tends to imply a significant level of user interaction, as opposed to the passive viewing of content. The outgrowth of social media is another instance in which technology has outpaced the law’s ability to define and control intellectual property protection. Individuals have engaged in “username squatting,” registering usernames containing another’s trademark with the intent to sell the username to the mark holder for a profit. While the basic practice of “squatting” in social media is similar to earlier forms, the means by which to protect trademarks are significantly different. Federal statutes and the UDRP cover only potentially infringing second-level domain names (the domains that appear in the Web address immediately preceding the top level domain, such as “.com”). Under current law, Facebook and Twitter are analogous to that of Internet Service Providers (ISPs), which are not directly liable for content under the Federal Trademark Dilution Act.

As shown in the proceeding discussion, the challenges of combating online trademark infringement lie in the lack of cohesion between government and nongovernment organizations in creating, applying and penalizing trademark infringement as well as the rapid growth of internet technologies that facilitate trademark infringement. Consequences of online trademark infringement hurt both consumers and brand owners by way of trademark tarnishment and devaluation and reduce the certainty associated with trademarks found online. References are available upon request.

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ADVERTISING ETHICS IN THE MIDDLE EAST: AN EXAMINATION OF PRACTITIONER PERSPECTIVES

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SUMMARY

The topic of advertising ethics has emerged as an important issue, but most empirical investigations have focused on Western countries. Emerging markets deserve attention. They pose the greatest opportunity for global marketers in terms of market and media expansion (Mahajan and Banga 2005). The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has experienced exponential economic growth and provides immense opportunities for global business. As a result, advertising media and agencies have flourished. At the same time, incidences that raise important ethical concerns are increasingly frequent, and only a handful of studies have examined advertising ethics in MENA (e.g., Mostafa 2011; Marta et al. 2004).

The current study examines industry perspectives on advertising ethics in the MENA region. In-depth interviews were conducted with advertising practitioners in the MENA region using a discussion guide adapted from previous research (Drumwright and Murphy 2004, 2009).

Our observations yielded a complicated story. Unlike in the U.S. where laws form the foundation for advertising ethics, the laws in MENA are either highly specific, such as a ban on alcohol advertising in the mass media, or nonexistent or unenforced. As such, there is something of a “laissez-faire” mentality with respect to many traditional issues of advertising ethics and law. For example, issues such as false claims, copyright concerns, and privacy issues either have little protection in the law or laws are not enforced. Consumers appear not to be concerned about or engaged with these issues, giving undue power to advertisers.

Emerging markets in the MENA region are undergoing a huge influx of new residents and exponential commercial growth. Our informants expressed significant concerns regarding negative effects of advertising on local culture. Many advertising decision makers are themselves “imports” from countries outside MENA, who come to work in MENA for short stints. These transient advertising practitioners often have limited understanding of local culture and conduct little research to gain insights about consumers. They typically adapt international campaigns and add a few local touches, which are not based on research. As a result, campaigns often portray local people and local culture in stereotypical ways, and executions often are offensive to local consumers. While individual campaigns may be problematic, the overall impact on culture is even more of a concern.

Issues of religion and commerce are on the agenda in interesting ways. Secular influences have been present in MENA for some time, and our informants spoke of the “modern Islamic consumer.” The traditional Islamic consumer saw commerce and religion as presenting conflicting values and struggled with many aspects of the marketplace. The “modern Islamic consumer” does not experience these struggles and can more readily embrace the marketplace. Yet, our informants expressed concern that commercial advertising would go too far and contribute to hyper materialism and the concomitant problems of bad debt that have plagued the U.S. and Europe. Such criticisms are, of course, made in the West as well, but in MENA, the worry is more intertwined with Islam and secularization more generally.

Pressures to meet short-term financial goals tend to have a negative effect on advertising ethics generally. The problem is exacerbated in the MENA region. Our informants reported that the transient nature of advertising workers predisposes them to do whatever it takes to deliver short-term results irrespective of the ethical implications. Our informants reported that the urgency to deliver short-term financial results is further amplified by the sense that MENA is “playing catch up” with the rest of the world, which also tends to have a negative effect on advertising ethics.

Although our informants at times generalized about MENA consumers and regions, they also noted that MENA is not one culture but many cultures and many sets of norms and values. This variation further complicates the practice of ethics in advertising. As one informant explained, “Each market is different in MENA. In one place, advertising something is considered wrong, but [in another], it is happening.”
Some informants reported that they do not assume that it is their responsibility to know about ethics; they assume that the human resources area should handle these issues. While some of the more obvious ethical issues are on their radar, more subtle issues, particularly those related to messages, are not.

Our informants, who are employed in the MENA offices of large agency networks, believed that they are less likely to act unethically because they are part of a multinational company with policies that would prevent them from committing ethical violations. They also perceived that the smaller agencies were likely to be the ones committing ethical violations. These are questions for empirical investigation.

Although our informants described a market that is rife with potential ethical infringements, they also described a context that they believe is likely to be changing dramatically with respect to business and advertising ethics. The so called “Arab Spring” has ushered in a wave of social change. Although scholars debate the nature and the effectiveness of the Arab Spring, there is no doubt that it is changing the social context and affecting business, marketing, and advertising as well as other social institutions. Our informants perceived that the Arab Spring is prompting consumers to demand more accountability and a higher degree of ethical behavior from companies. Our informants also asserted that they see some evidence of a new breed of advertising worker. They observed that this worker also wants more transparency and higher ethical standards at work.

It would be much too ethnocentric to suggest that all the problems regarding ethics and advertising are essentially the same across cultures and that the solutions for these problems should map onto the U.S. or Western European models. It would be equally disturbing, however, to imagine that societies in which the laws regulating business are underdeveloped or more laissez faire, either de jure or de facto, are indifferent to ethical concerns. Because advertising is undergoing globalization and emerging markets are becoming key players, it seems particularly important to try to understand the ethical issues in advertising in regions such as MENA.

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**MARKETING THE MEDIA WITH SEXUALITY AND VIOLENCE: IS IT ETHICAL?**

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**SUMMARY**

Sexuality and violence in the media have been a matter for discussion among researchers (e.g., Lanis and Covell 1995; Wilson and Moore 1979; Allen, D’Allesio, and Brezgel 1995). Many researchers have criticized the media due to its pervasive use of pornography/sexuality and violence. To date the media have received harsh critiques from not only researchers but also other units in the society such as families, feminists, educators and religious institutions. Despite all the critiques and concerns, sexuality and violence are still the most pervasive contents of the media. Unlike the extant literature on sexuality and violence in the media, this research considers these concepts as marketing instruments used by the mass media. Given the fact that the media institutions use sexuality and violence in order to attract more viewers or consumers, we may argue that they use these two phenomena as a marketing tool. Sexuality and violence appear as an instrument in advertisements, shows, movies, news, or in other broadcasts. Whatever the context is, both concepts are used as marketing instruments, which are expected to attract more viewers.

The main purpose of this study is to determine whether the use of sexuality and violence by the media institutions is ethical according to business ethics theories. For this purpose, it evaluates the subject matters in the lights of some fundamental business ethics theories, namely Kantian, Utilitarian, Aristotelian, and Contractarian approaches to business ethics. In addition, it aims at introducing a framework for the evaluation of controversial issues in marketing practices in terms of business ethics. In this respect, it firstly offers a brief review of literature on sexuality and violence in the media and their effects on individuals and society. Secondly, it examines the business ethics theories to determine whether it is ethical for the media to use sexuality and violence as a marketing instrument. Thirdly, it offers a framework to be used in the ethical analysis of controversial issues in firms’ marketing practices. Finally, it discusses the contributions, limitations and implications.

The problems with the abuse of women and sexuality in the mass media are various. There are both empirical and theoretical bases for claiming a link between the use of sexuality in the media and individuals’ sexual and general attitudes and beliefs (Lanis and Covell 1995; Brown 2002). For example, exposure to sexuality has been found to increase older adolescents’ acceptance of non-marital sexual behavior (Brown 2002). In addition, it causes less expectation of sexual exclusivity with partners, less concern about sexual child abuse, and concern about that sexual inactivity leads to a health risk (Zillmann 2000). There are also both empirical and theoretical bases for claiming a link between sexuality in the media and individuals’ behavior. Research (e.g., Wilson and Moore 1979; Allen, Emmers, Allen, and Gebhardt 1995) suggests a connection between viewing sexually-oriented stimuli and aggression and violence. Exposure to sexually attractive stimuli increases males’ sexual aggression towards females (Emmers, Allen, and Gebhardt 1995), the inclination to commit rape (Zillmann 2000) and interpersonal violence (Brown 2002). Furthermore, it increases sexual callousness (Zillmann 2000). In addition, viewing sexual scenes may lead young individuals to have sexual relations (Stern and Handel 2004). The use of violence in the mass media has also been a matter for discussion among researchers. Many researchers (e.g., Proctor 2004; Murray 2008) have examined its possible effects on individuals and society, and found that it negatively influences individuals. Although studies on violence in the mass media have revealed unequivocal evidence, many of them have found that media violence increases the likelihood of aggressive and violent behavior in both immediate and long-term contexts (Anderson et al. 2003). The most negative effects of violent media content can be seen on children. It is argued that children tend to imitate the violence they watch on television, a process explained by social learning theory, which is a well-established approach in social psychology (Felson 1996).

The examination of Kantian, Utilitarian, Aristotelian, and Contractarian approaches to business ethics suggests that the use of sexuality and violence in the mass media as a marketing tool is an unethical practice. All the business ethics theories examined support this conclusion. The deductions about the use of sexuality are stronger than the use of violence. In other words, the conclusion about the immorality of the use of sexuality as a marketing instrument is stronger than the conclusion about the immorality of the use of violence. The deductions of this study argue that many media institutions are violating the fundamental ethical principles by using sexuality and violence. Given the fact that the media institutions use sexuality and
violence as a marketing instrument in order to attract more viewers or consumers, it means that the media companies are trying to market themselves or their products at the expense of ignoring business ethics. This study also introduces a framework for the evaluation of controversial issues in marketing practices in terms of business ethics. This framework is developed from the analysis of the four business ethics approaches. It will serve as a guideline for the discussion of controversial ethical issues that may arise in marketing practices.

This study has implications for not only media institutions, but also firms. It suggests that the media institutions and firms, particularly marketers and advertisers, should consider the ethical aspects of the use of women and sexuality as a marketing instrument. Furthermore, the media institutions should take into account the negative effects of the use of violence on society. Future research may examine the generalizability and applicability of the deductions about the use of sexuality and violence and of the proposed framework. Furthermore, future research may examine how sexual and violent contents influence viewers’ attitudes towards the media institutions. Finally, future researchers could examine other business ethics theories to determine whether it is ethical to use sexuality and violence as a marketing instrument. References are available upon request.

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TELEVISION ADVERTISING AND TV RATING SYSTEM: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF APPROPRIATENESS OF TELEVISION ADVERTISING CONTENT

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SUMMARY

For decades efforts have been in place to help parents control children’s content exposure. A version of the movie rating system has been in place since the 1960s (CARA 2010). As television programming became more diverse, potentially resulting from the fewer restrictions on cable, rating systems were developed specifically for TV. This rating system is similar to, but separate from, the older system used for cinemas. Ostensibly, these rating systems provide parents important decision-making information. The effectiveness of both of these rating systems has been questioned. Regardless of the potential drawbacks of the systems, they provide some level of information to parents and caregivers for making decisions. Clearly, there is a debate about regulation and parental control in the protection of children from broadcast content (Walsh, Laczniak, and Carlson 1988). Presumably, in the absences of increased regulation, the rating systems offer an important source of information that parents can use to make decisions. Unfortunately, while programs are rated and the rating is fairly accessible, advertisements which are aired before, during and after programs are not.

Much has been written about children’s advertising. While the issues are still hotly debated, the previous research has confirmed that children are, at least on some level, influenced or engaged by advertising (Bush, Martin, and Bush 2004; Moses and Baldwin 2005; Wright, Friestad, and Boush 2005). As such, the Federal Trade Commission and the American Psychological Association have supported caution when advertising directly to children (Kunkel et al. 2004; Wicks et al. 2009). Previous concerns raise the question of the selection of programs by advertisers in which to air their commercials. If an advertisement was rated based on the same criteria used to rate programs, would parental control efforts on children’s viewing be preserved?

The primary purpose of this research was to examine the extent to which advertising content is consistent with the rating of the program in which it appears. Specifically, the goal of this research is to compare the rating of television programs to a rating of advertisements based on the criteria used to rate TV programming. It was necessary to identify programs across all of the television ratings, select advertisements which appeared during the programs, content code the advertisements based on the criteria for program rating, and rate the advertisement based on the content. Content for mature themes was also collected.

In the first stage of this study, a group of parents assisted in the exploration of the understanding of the rating systems and provided insight into which programs their children watched. These parents also provided information regarding their perceptions of objectionable or mature content. The discussions of mature content were not limited to material which was aired during commercials, but all TV broadcasting, including programs and commercials. The identified mature themes ranged from material that some people might find only mildly objectionable (e.g., gambling, cigarette smoking, alcohol consumption) to material that most parents indicated as very objectionable (e.g., abortion, sex, violent crime against children). All of the themes identified were included in the empirical phase of the study.

The data for this study were collected using content analysis of television advertisements across all eight TV ratings. All of the programs considered for inclusion in this study (even the TVMA) were programs appealing to children. The selection of appealing programs was based on the input from the previously discussed informal group of parents. Following the compilation of a comprehensive list, three programs from each category were randomly selected. Because the programs varied greatly in length (from 30 minutes to several hours), the first 12 ads following the start of the program were recorded. This resulted in the inclusion of 36 ads per rating category. The advertisements were cropped from the program in which it appeared to avoid any influence on the coders. A single recording containing only the 288 advertisements of interest were provided to the coders. The ads were intermixed so that the coders did not view large blocks of ads from the same program rating category.
Coding was conducted using a standardized coding form based on the rating system criteria and a list of 30 mature themes. Two parents were selected as coders because parents were the most experienced at determining the extent to which content might be perceived as objectionable or too mature for children. The coders had a high degree of agreement with coded responses correlating at 0.9563.

Based on coding, all advertisements were assigned a TV system rating (TVG, TVY7, etc.) For every program rating, more than 40 percent of the coded ads were at the general audience rating (TVG/TVY). More than 80 percent of the ads aired during TVG and more than 50 percent of the ads aired during TVY programs were appropriate for all ages. Furthermore, only two ads were coded as containing TVMA level content. Unfortunately, those ads ran during a TVPG program and during a Live, unrated program. While the number of G/Y rating advertisements is encouraging, more than 20 percent of the time a child watching a program is likely to see an advertisement with content which exceeds the content rating for the program. Additionally, coders looked for 30 mature themes, including nudity, sex to sell, graphic disaster images, etc. Children are likely to be exposed to an average of more than one mature theme per ad. Viewers were most likely to encounter mature themes during TVPG programs, an average of 4.19 mature themes per advertisement.

The results from this study are concerning, especially for the most diligent parent working to restrict a child’s access to inappropriate material by limiting program viewing. Restricting a child’s access to program using a V-chip or monitoring the program rating does not remove the risk that a child will see content which exceeds the program rating. Even if program rating criteria was applied to advertisements, the number of adult or mature themes which runs during general audience and children’s programming is disturbing. References are available upon request.

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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF PERCEIVED TRUST AND SKEPTICISM OF PRODUCT PLACEMENT IN REALITY TELEVISION

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SUMMARY
Product placement (PPL) is now a staple in TV programming, particularly reality shows, despite attempts by the National Association of Broadcasters to limit it. In 2008, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced its intentions to review new rules on how TV programmers disclose paid “props” to viewers. The FCC is considering whether current notices at the end of the show should be in bigger print, run for a longer period, or included as a running strip during the scene with the sponsored product (Kang 2008). While the Writers Guild and the Screen Actors Guild have objected to the increase in PPL in TV shows, consumer perceptions of skepticism and trust about PPL have not been studied. Further, little empirical research has evaluated consumer perceptions of PPL in reality shows. Since the Writers Guild strike in 2007–2009, TV viewers have seen an increase in reality programs during prime time, providing an attractive option for advertisers, but consumer perceptions of the ethical nature of PPL in reality shows may moderate its effectiveness.

Some reality programs have been sponsored exclusively by brands which have led to longer PPL segments. For example, NBC’s The Biggest Loser has integrated products like Orville Redenbacher 100-Calorie SmartPop, Extra chewing gum and Ziploc bags. These longer segments prominently feature participants using and discussing the brands, integrating them in the storyline and offering more information than traditional PPLs. The question remains how consumers perceive these extended PPLs. Hence, the purpose of this exploratory study is to understand consumer attitudes toward PPLs in reality TV shows, with an emphasis on the perceptions of trust and skepticism. This study allows us to understand the ethical implications of using PPL within reality shows, and consider our findings within the nature of public policy.

Product placement on television is used to increase product and brand awareness and to generate positive associations toward the brand, which should ideally result in a positive shift in brand attitudes (Cowley and Barron 2008). Several studies have linked attitudes toward the ad indirectly to purchase intentions via attitudes toward the brand (Shimp 1981; MacKenzie et al. 1986). While attitudes toward PPL and attitudes toward advertising are not the same constructs, we feel enough similarities exist across the constructs to believe the relationships between attitudes and intentions would be similar for PPLs. Thus, we propose similar relationships between attitudes toward the ad (PPL), attitudes toward the brand, and purchase intentions.

Moreover, consumers may be growing skeptical of PPL, and in particular, the increase in the number of placements on reality shows. Thus, it is important to understand how consumers’ skepticism and trust of PPLs in reality shows can affect their attitudes and perceptions. If consumers are becoming more desensitized to PPL on reality shows or if consumers are more skeptical about such placements, PPLs may be an effective option for advertisers but may result in the FCC mandating regulations. Thus, we propose that viewers’ general skepticism of PPL in a reality show may influence attitudes toward the PPL and brand featured in that show.

While advertising provides information to consumers, ethical concerns arise when consumers believe the content and techniques to be covert and deceptive. With the growth of PPL, there is no longer a separation between promotional efforts and editorial content (Baerns 2003). PPL has been described as being obtrusive and as one of the least ethical forms of advertising (Nebenzahl and Jaffe 1998). However, others contend that consumers’ trust in PPL is higher than traditional advertising (Lai-man et al. 2010). Because of this, consumers believe these placements are overt, and thus ethical, with minimum negative effects on consumers. Thus, we propose that the trust of PPL in reality acts as a predictor of attitudes and behaviors.

For the current study, we selected a scene from NBC’s The Biggest Loser, which both visually and verbally featured the Orville Redenbacher’s 100-Calorie SmartPop. A convenience sample of 250 business students at a large university in the Southeast viewed the edited segment in a classroom setting and immediately completed a ques-
The questionnaire included a series of measures to assess perceptions of skepticism and trust, as well as several attitudinal measures. Reliability and validity of the scale measures adequately fit the measurement model in M-Plus. The structural model found full or partial support for the five proposed hypotheses.

This exploratory study expands the concept of PPL into this growing reality TV genre by better understanding trust of PPL in reality shows as a predictor of skepticism, attitudes and perceptions. This study supports past research on attitudes toward ad, supporting direct relationships with brands and indirect relationships on purchase intentions, extending to PPLs in reality shows. Moreover, the tested PPL from The Biggest Loser resulted in more skepticism of the placement which affected their attitudes toward the PPL and the brand. Further, trust of PPLs in reality shows was found to be a predictor of skepticism of the specific PPL and attitudes toward the PPL segment, but not attitudes toward the brand in the reality show. Interestingly, trust influenced attitudes toward the PPL segment, indicating that the more trust a consumer had in the PPL in reality shows in general, the more favorable his/her attitudes were toward the specific PPL segment. However, trust did not influence attitudes toward the brand; a consumer may have liked the PPL segment, but did not care for the featured brand. Finally, trust in PPL in reality shows lowered consumers’ skepticism toward the placement.

Studying PPL in reality shows provides necessary insight to advertisers and public policymakers to better understand the conditions which make PPLs more or less successful. Advertisers are motivated to use PPL because it has been found to increase consumers’ brand recall and encourage more favorable attitudes and persuasive outcomes (Bhatnagar et al. 2004). However, the increase in PPL on TV comes with a price. PPL is already under scrutiny by public policymakers who are concerned with its deceptive nature and potential lack of awareness of the commercial intent by TV viewers. Regulation may be warranted if consumers’ skepticism of the practice results in an erosion of their trust in companies using PPL. Both advertisers and public policymakers need to be more aware of consumers’ attitudes, skepticism and trust of this growing medium. References are available upon request.

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SOURCE EFFECTS ON HEALTH MARKETING MESSAGES

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SUMMARY

Health organizations frequently encourage consumers to engage in physical activity by sometimes describing physical activity as fun and at other times as the work necessary to attain health. This paper examines how the effectiveness of work-framed and fun-framed health marketing messages is influenced by revealing that the message source is a health organization. The authors contend that health organizations remind consumers about what they ‘should’ do and as a result, work-framed messages are expected to be more persuasive than fun-framed messages when message recipients know that the message source is a health organization. Conversely, when message recipients are unaware that the message source is a health organization, it is expected that consumers will be more persuaded by fun-framed messages. This prediction was tested in two studies. Study one used a 2 (message frame: work/fun) by 2 (sponsor: disclosed/undisclosed) between subjects design in which mock print advertisements promoted physical activity by describing it as work (Get to work and get fit today!) or fun (Have some fun and get fit today!). Subjects in the disclosed condition were told that a university wide health organization sponsored the message but subjects in the undisclosed condition did not see this message. Participants then read a work or fun-framed message and responded to physical activity attitude measures. Ninety-six undergraduate students participated in the study. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) revealed that work-framed messages were more effective than fun-framed messages when message recipients were aware of the message source. This difference was not evident in the sponsor undisclosed condition. Contrary to expectations, fun-framed messages were not more effective when message source was undisclosed. Study Two followed the procedure as used in Study One but used real television commercials and a nationally recognized health organization. Study two also used a 2 (fitness commercial/sports commercial) by 2 (source: disclosed/undisclosed) between subjects design. Consistent with Study One, the ANOVA revealed that message recipients who were aware of the message source were more persuaded by the work-than the fun-framed message. When message source was not disclosed however, that fun-framed message was more effective than the work-framed message. These studies contributes source effects literature by providing evidence that message source credibility adds to message effectiveness only when message content and message source are congruent. These studies suggest that health organizations may maximize the effectiveness of their health communications by employing work rather than fun-framed messages. References are available upon request.

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WHITE LINE FEVER? COMMERCIAL TRANSPORTATION REGULATION AND ITS IMPACT ON HIGHWAY SAFETY

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Cassandra Davis, University of Arkansas
Eramus C. Kemp, Kemp Transportation Systems, Indianapolis

SUMMARY

This research examines the psychological stressors that affect the drivers of large trucks and which may have an impact on highway safety. New regulations set forth by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) seek to advance road safety and reduce the number of large truck accidents. These regulations include a comprehensive safety monitoring program known as the Compliance, Safety, and Accountability Program (CSA), which promotes safety by shifting accident prevention efforts from the truck equipment to the truck drivers. Specifically, these new policies are intended to decrease occupational fatigue by reconfiguring “hours-of-service” – the total numbers of hours that drivers may spend on the road and hours that they must rest – and the electronic monitoring of compliance of these hours. However, these policies do little to account for psychological factors that may affect truck drivers and contribute to accidents.

Truck drivers may be particularly susceptible to burnout and emotional exhaustion because of time pressures and work-environmental factors outside of their control. Burnout is a psychological condition caused by chronic stress and is comprised of three components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishments (e.g., Maslach and Jackson 1981). Research on burnout has led to the generally accepted belief that emotional exhaustion is the most central component to the burnout process (Boles, Johnston, and Hair 1997; Babakus et al. 1999). Emotional exhaustion refers to feelings of being overextended and depleted of one’s emotional resources. It is an affective response to job-related demand stressors that may result in employee feelings of incompetence or a lack of achievement toward his/her work. Our purpose was to examine the roles that emotional and physical exhaustion may play in complying with federal regulations.

Exploratory analyses included depth interviews with professional truck drivers at truck stops at several locations across the United States. Truck drivers were asked a series of open-ended questions regarding their daily experiences about the job, their opinions on existing safety regulations, and about measures that might be taken to improve road safety. The drivers indicated that several factors had an impact on their job performance, including pressure to deliver loads on time, employer/company stresses, and external factors, all of which influenced their attitudes toward safety and current regulations.

Feedback and remarks from the drivers were then integrated with existing literature to develop a conceptual model which assessed truck driver stressors and attitudes toward safety. The literature and qualitative analysis suggest that work conditions and environmental factors outside of the driver’s control may cause professional truck drivers to be susceptible to chronic stress. Specifically, the conceptual model hypothesizes that time pressure leads to feelings of stress. The resulting physical and emotional exhaustion are negatively related to attitudes toward safety compliance, which leads to reduced compliance and negative attitudes toward the regulations. Thus, reduced hours of service may actually increase the perceptions of time pressure on drivers, which may cause physical fatigue and emotional exhaustion, affecting job performance, road safety and regulatory compliance.

To assess the model, surveys were administered to a total of 435 professional truck drivers at seven truck stops throughout the country. Emotional exhaustion was measured using items adapted from Singh, Goolsby, and Rhoads (1994) and focused on company-related pressures that professional drivers might experience. The scale included eight items (e.g., “Working with shippers and receivers is really a strain for me,” and “I am emotionally drained by the stress my dispatcher puts on me”). Scales items were developed specifically for the other constructs represented in this research.

The results of a structural equation analysis support the hypothesized effects of time pressure and work-environmental factors on driver stress and subsequent effects on job performance and road safety and regulatory
compliance. These results indicate that increased scrutiny on drivers (through electronic monitoring of behavior) as well as job-specific time pressures create stress and lead to physical and emotional exhaustion. These conditions, in turn, are related to negative attitudes regarding road safety and regulatory compliance.

The findings presented suggest several unintended consequences of the new regulations for large truck drivers. They also call to question the effectiveness of new regulations on reducing large truck accidents and preventing traffic accidents and fatalities involving large trucks. Thus, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration may be well served in expanding the safety compliance program to include a de-stressing component aimed at reducing the stress experienced by large truck drivers. Such a program may lead to decreases in truck driver stress and, in turn, may prevent or reduce large truck accidents. References are available upon request.

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MANAGING PRODUCT SAFETY THROUGHOUT THE DISTRIBUTION NETWORK

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Karl A. Boedecker, University of San Francisco, San Francisco
Jeffrey J. Stoltman, Wayne State University, Detroit

SUMMARY

When harm occurs due to defective products, manufacturers and retailers are the obvious targets for recovery by injured consumers. In today’s global markets, however, other defendants may be accessible via the increasingly recognized concept of enterprise liability. Providing for the victim’s recovery is the logic underlying enterprise liability; hence, it is an insurance concept that establishes the entire distribution network as a collective insurer. Retailers, in their position as final sellers, play a pivotal role in assuring that safe products flow into the marketplace. In this paper, we discuss the safety-enhancing strategies available to retailers as they select and work with supply chain partners.

The retailer is particularly vulnerable in an enterprise liability regime because of its customer contact. If an overseas provider of a product component lacks sufficient safety controls, the multi-store U.S. retailer that sold the faulty final product to, for example, a Pennsylvania resident is accessible in Pennsylvania courts. Enterprise liability reasoning provides this guarantee for the plaintiff’s access to all supply chain defendants via the retailer. The retailer who did not know about the unsafe component will then attempt to recover from the component supplier. The retailer who knew about the unsafe component but continued to do business with this supplier may have a more difficult time seeking indemnification.

The role of the retailer is clearly important in countries where enterprise liability reasoning prevails. Retailers dominate consumers’ access to products and can therefore influence product safety levels. Obvious steps include careful selection of supply chain partners and the provision of in-store safety and product use information.

The growth and popularity of Internet shopping counters somewhat the effectiveness of enterprise liability as an insurer of product safety. Issues of jurisdiction arise, e.g., if our Pennsylvanian is harmed by a product manufactured in country A, shipped directly from a warehouse in country B by a manufacturer incorporated in country C, what legal entity is responsible? How does our consumer gain legal access to this entity? These issues remain to be resolved.

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DYING TO BE TAN: POLICY DIRECTIVES FOR THE INDOOR TANNING INDUSTRY

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Les Carlson, University of Nebraska – Lincoln

ABSTRACT
The conceptual framework of Informed Choice is utilized within the context of the Indoor Tanning Industry. A study of 293 undergraduate students assesses consumers’ ability to make informed choices based on four levels, finding evidence for only Level 1. As such, policy initiatives are further needed to enable informed decision making.

INTRODUCTION
As the winter months set upon us, many consumers seek out ways to maintain their tanned skin from the summer past or to soak in warm rays to lift spirits and escape the snowy outdoors. What many consumers fail to realize, however, is that the above statements are messages the indoor tanning industry has put forth to maintain revenue; men are convinced that tanned women are thinner and more beautiful (Banerjee, Campo, and Greene 2008), while depressed individuals are told they are simply lacking sufficient levels of Vitamin D (Levine et al. 2005). As such, the dangers of tanning are ignored for the promise of health and beauty.

Despite the pervasiveness of indoor tanning advertisements, the health care profession, as well as consumer advocates, has begun to speak out about the dangers of indoor tanning. Numerous articles in the popular press have been released touting the dangers of indoor tanning and the alternatives available to consumers looking for a tan (e.g., spray-tans, sunless tanning lotions). Despite such efforts, indoor tanning remains a $5 billion industry (Lazovich and Forster 2005) capturing the attention of millions of consumers.

The prevalence of indoor tanning behaviors are continually on the rise despite increased knowledge of severe health risks (e.g., skin cancer) associated with said behavior (Cokkinides et al. 2009). Although policy initiatives have been under way since the mid-1980s, effective change agents have yet to be seen; while those in the indoor tanning industry express displeasure over increasing regulations (Dwyer 2010), the incidents of skin cancer continue to increase (Ibrahim and Brown 2008). Such dichotomy between corporate messages and consumer health calls for more effective, mutually beneficial policy directives. Increased regulation, however, may not always be appropriate. As often cited in the similar, yet further developed, domain of tobacco legislation, industry regulation is unsuitable when consumers are able to make informed choices in the marketplace (Chapman and Liberman 2005). Accordingly, Leventhal et al. (1987) and Chapman and Liberman (2005) utilize the framework of informed choice to assess whether individuals maintain adequate knowledge needed to make well-informed decisions regarding risk-inducing behaviors in the marketplace.

Such a perspective is missing, and thus needed, for the indoor tanning industry. As prior policy initiatives have either proven ineffective or spawned displeasure (Dwyer 2010), it is necessary to take a step back to first understand if regulation is indeed the answer. Are consumers capable of making an informed decision in utilizing indoor tanning equipment and thus governmental regulation is impeding on their rights of free choice? Or, are consumers acting out of ignorance of the risks and dangers of indoor tanning and thus need policy protection in place to circumvent the development of serious health risks? Accordingly, it is the goal of this paper to assess the current level of informed choice utilized by consumers in the indoor tanning industry to more clearly understand the policy gaps under discovery.

INDOOR TANNING INDUSTRY
The indoor tanning industry became popular in the late 1970s (Lazovich and Forster 2005) providing consumers with a means of tanning year round in an indoor setting through the use of simulated ultraviolet rays normally emitted from the sun. With approximately 42 facilities per city across the United States (Hoerster et al. 2009), indoor tanning has an estimated $5 billion annual revenue with nearly 30 million customers nationwide (Lazovich and Forster 2005). Consumers of the industry have a quite characteristic demographic, as 70 percent of the indoor tanning population is Caucasian, with females two to three times more likely to patronize tanning salons than males (Lazovich and Forster 2005). Further, the highest proportion of indoor tanning users range between the ages of 15–29 years old (Woo and Eide 2010).
Although the Indoor Tanning Association has put forth the claim that tanning indoors is, in fact, a safe alternative to tanning outdoors (see http://www.ftc.gov/opa/2010/01/tanning.shtm), there are significant dangers for any type of tanning activity. In fact, the National Toxicology Program classified UVA, UVB, and UVC as known carcinogens to humans in 2002 (National Toxicology Program 2002), while the World Health Organization attributed approximately 71,000 deaths in the year 2000 to excessive ultraviolet exposure (Ibrahim and Brown 2008). Such staggering figures illustrate the potentially harmful misconceptions consumers have about the relative safety of indoor tanning equipment (Woo and Eide 2010), as all levels of ultraviolet light are indeed harmful. As such, indoor tanning causes a plethora of dangerous side effects including those identified by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) such as skin cancer, premature aging, immune suppression, eye damage, and allergic reactions (see Table 1 for risk factors associated with indoor tanning).

Despite increased knowledge of indoor tanning risks, Cokkinides et al. (2009) observed a three percent increase in tanning behaviors and a seven percent increase in attitudinal preference for tan skin from 1998–2004. Although the risk of injury from tanning bed use ranges from 26 percent–59 percent of the tanning population, such experiences fail to have an impact on future tanning intentions or behaviors (Lazovich and Forster 2005). It is for these reasons that indoor tanning policies have been an important item on the policy agenda in recent years. As highlighted in Table 2, several policy initiatives have been developed in an attempt to curtail indoor tanning behaviors. Numerous agencies have utilized a variety of policy tactics aimed at both informing the public and compelling the tanning industry to behave in a more responsible manner. Despite the continual policy attention, both indoor tanning behaviors and the rate of skin cancer development continue to rise. In fact, skin cancer cases have risen 2000 percent in the past 75 years (Ibrahim and Brown 2008).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1</th>
<th>Indoor Tanning Health Risks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health Risk</td>
<td>Supporting Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin Cancer</td>
<td>FDA; Coelho and Hearing (2009); Greene and Brinn (2003); Pathak (1991); Ting et al. (2007); Whitmore et al. (2001); Woo and Eide (2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premature Aging</td>
<td>FDA; Greene and Brinn (2003); Heckman, Wilson, and Ingersoll (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye Damage</td>
<td>FDA; Greene and Brinn (2003); Miller, Beer, and Savalia (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burning</td>
<td>Berwick (2008); Cokkinides et al. (2009); Greene and Brinn (2003); Geller et al. (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin Damage (e.g., discoloration, blisters)</td>
<td>Spencer and Amonette (1995)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infection</td>
<td>Cokkinides et al. (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addiction</td>
<td>Kravitz (2010); Mosher and Danoff-Burg (2010); Nolan et al. (2009); Poorsattar and Hornung (2007); Zeller et al. (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alteration of Immune System</td>
<td>FDA; Cokkinides et al. (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaction to Medication</td>
<td>FDA; Cokkinides et al. (2009)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

INFOMRED CHOICE

As indoor tanning is an established risk-inducing behavior and current policy initiatives struggle to provide the intended decreases in indoor tanning behaviors, it is
necessary to move the discussion towards that of informed choice. Informed choice, defined as a decision made with “understandable, relevant, and high-quality information” in order to “build up a picture of the available options and compare the advantages and disadvantages of each” (Baxter, Glendinning, and Clarke 2008, p. 198), is a framework frequently used in policy debates between consumer advocates and corporate representatives. From a policy perspective, governmental regulation is needed for all behaviors in which an individual is unable to make an accurate and informed choice through his/her own devices. Alternatively, it is most often the role taken on by corporations to fight for consumer freedom of choice and “sufficient” information disclosure.

As informed choice is most popularly utilized in the tobacco industry’s rebuttal against stricter regulation, policy makers stand strong under the supposition that consumers fail to be provided with sufficient and accurate information on the risks of smoking needed to make an informed behavioral decision. Without proper information to make said decision, policy makers put forth the need to intervene with measures designed to protect the health of individuals at the lapse of full corporate disclosure. The question that arises from this dichotomy of opinions rests on the exploration of what truly constitutes sufficient knowledge to make an adequately informed decision; and thus, what requirements are needed to consider an individual fully informed and capable acting of alone without regulatory interference.

According to Chapman and Liberman (2005), there are four distinct levels used to classify a “fully informed” individual (see Table 3). In understanding the four levels of informed choice below, it is to be said that an “adequately informed” individual is able to demonstrate an awareness and understanding of levels two and three, with a belief that their behaviors are likely to pose significant risks to their health, as well (Chapman and Liberman 2005).

### METHODOLOGY

Based on the four levels of informed choice described above, the goal of the study is to assess consumers’ ability to make an informed choice regarding indoor tanning behaviors. Accordingly, such knowledge is needed to understand the appropriate role of public policy as related
to the indoor tanning industry. A sample of 293 undergraduate students from a midsized Midwestern university participated in a paper and pencil study for course credit. A student sample was an acceptable respondent base for this study, as the highest proportion of individuals who tan are between the ages of 15 and 29 (Woo and Eide 2010). As such, an undergraduate student sample accurately captures this demographic.

The study takes on a survey design of open-ended measures aimed to understand the tanning behaviors and beliefs of individuals who either do or do not frequent indoor tanning salons. Survey questions are adapted from Leventhal et al. (1987), who sought to understand the level of informed choice of young consumers in the domain of cigarette smoking. Open-ended questions used in their study are modified herein to understand the level of informed choice as related to the indoor tanning industry. Participants were asked to estimate the likelihood (%) of developing cancer from indoor tanning practices for one of four randomly selected groups: (1) peers their age, (2) adults over thirty, (3) themselves, and (4) others. Respondents were also asked if they believe indoor tanning to be dangerous to one’s health, as well as to list all health risks they associate with indoor tanning. Such exploration allows for an empirical understanding of current consumers’ knowledge related to the four defining levels of informed choice. Despite the nature of the study, no evidence exists of respondents changing previous answers from cues given later in the survey.

**RESULTS**

Preliminary data analysis first sought to understand the general tanning behavior of the respondent base, finding that, out of a sample of 293 participants, 38.9 percent of individuals have in the past or currently tan indoors, while the remaining 61.1 percent have never used an indoor tanning facility. Those who tan indoors cited an overall average of tanning 1.27 times per week, with a maximum of four visits. While not equally represented, the study maintains a significant number of both indoor tanners and non-tanners to make sufficient comparisons.

First, we sought to understand the perceived frequencies of indoor tanning use by survey respondents for both individuals their age and adults over thirty to understand how the primary consumer group perceives the popularity of indoor tanning (see Table 4). This was measured by two open-ended questions asking, (1) “In general, about what percentage of people your age tan indoors?” and (2) “In general, about what percentage of adults over the age of 30 tan indoors?” Overall, survey respondents over-predicted the frequency of indoor tanning behaviors of both indi-

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**TABLE 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Informed Choice</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Informed Study Results</th>
<th>Properly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Awareness of increased health risks</td>
<td>93.9 percent awareness of health risks for indoor tanning</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Awareness of all health risks caused by identified behavior</td>
<td>81 percent of respondents identified skin cancer; all other risks identified by less than 21 percent of respondents</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Accurately understanding the meaning, severity, and probabilities of developing negative health consequences</td>
<td>Predicted risk of skin cancer: 36.75 percent; Actual risk of skin cancer: 75 percent (Woo and Eide 2010)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>Acceptance of personal risks identified in Levels 2 and 3</td>
<td>Personal skin cancer risk: 35.46 percent; Someone else’s risk of skin cancer: 37.99 percent;</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
individuals their age, as well as adults over thirty. According to the literature, approximately 20.4 percent of young adults tan indoors (Woo and Eide 2010), while only 8 percent of adults over thirty frequent indoor tanning salons (Cokkinides et al. 2002). The study at hand found perceived indoor tanning usage at an estimate of 47.9 percent for one’s peer group and 28.4 percent for individuals over thirty. Split by gender, however, we find significant differences between male and female estimates of indoor tanning frequencies for both their peers \(F(1,215) = 25.719, p < .01\) and adults over thirty \(F(1,213) = 15.894, p < .01\). While both sexes still over-estimated the frequency of indoor tanning behaviors, females cited higher frequencies (54.27%, 32.53%) than males (41.26%, 23.88%) for both their peers and adults over thirty, respectively.

More telling results are uncovered through a comparison of tanner vs. non-tanner responses. Survey respondents who tan indoors believe the frequency of indoor tanning usage to be significantly higher than their non-tanning counterpart, for both peer group \(F(1,216) = 39.89, p < .01\) and adults over thirty \(F(1,214) = 21.94, p < .01\). Accordingly, those who tan indoors estimate approximately 57.75 percent of individuals in their peer group to frequent tanning salons, while non-tanners express a much lower estimate at 41.66 percent. Similar results are found for adults over thirty, as indoor tanners cite usage estimations of 34.59 percent, while non-tanners estimate much lower at 24.37 percent.

It is clear here that not only do individuals over-predict the prevalence of indoor tanning practices, but those who engage in such behavior are significantly more likely to over-estimate tanning behaviors. These results highlight the misconceptions consumers hold about the indoor tanning industry, believing that (a) indoor tanning is more popular than what actually occurs and (b) peer group acceptance of such behavior may, in fact, be lower than currently perceived.

### Level 1

According to Chapman and Liberman (2005), the first level of informed choice involves the general awareness that the given behavior increases health risks. Accordingly, to measure said awareness we asked respondents if they believe there are any health risks associated with indoor tanning. Overall, we found overwhelming support for this statement with 93.9 percent \(n = 293\) of respondents answering “yes” to the presence of risk from indoor tanning.

With an awareness quotient of almost 94 percent, we can acknowledge that consumers, in general, are aware that indoor tanning increases the health risks of individuals. Further studies on informed choice for smoking behaviors have found similarly high awareness percentages of 88 percent (Wakefield, Freeman, and Donovan 2003) and 98 percent (Leventhal et al. 1987), thus confirming the high awareness found in this study (see Table 3).

### Level 2

The next level needed to make an informed decision involves a higher level of awareness in being able to

### TABLE 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tanning Behavior</th>
<th>Peers Tan (%)</th>
<th>Adults Tan (%)</th>
<th>General Risk of Cancer (%)</th>
<th>Personal Risk of Cancer (%)</th>
<th>Other’s Risks of Cancer (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tanner</td>
<td>57.75</td>
<td>34.59</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>43.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Tanner</td>
<td>41.66</td>
<td>24.37</td>
<td>35.18</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>35.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>41.26</td>
<td>23.88</td>
<td>27.52</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>21.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>54.27</td>
<td>32.53</td>
<td>45.22</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>54.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Literature      | ~ 20.4        | ~ 8            | ~ 75                        | ~ 75                        | ~ 75                        |
identify specific diseases that are caused by the given behavior. While it is often the case that individuals are able to name one major risk of any given behavior (e.g., lung cancer from cigarette smoking), a complete awareness of risks is necessary for an individual to be considered fully informed (Chapman and Liberman 2005). As seen in Table 1, the literature recognizes nine key risks to indoor tanning, including, most prominently, skin cancer, premature aging, eye damage, and burning. Figure 1 illustrates the results from the current study, in which respondents were instructed, “Please list all dangers and risks you believe are associated with indoor tanning.” As seen in Figure 1, we find that, although 81 percent (n = 230) of respondents recognize skin cancer as a risk to indoor tanning, the next highest identified risk, premature aging, is only identified by 20.9 percent (n = 230) of individuals. Similarly, additional risks identified in the literature were only identified by a minority of the respondents, as such: eye damage (16.5%), burning (14.8%), skin damage (15.2%), infection (4.8%), addiction (2.2%), and alteration of immune system (0.4%). While other risk factors not emphasized in the literature were mentioned by respondents, such identification was seldom, with the most prominent concern (albeit only mentioned by five individuals) involving the high price of indoor tanning practices.

The data uncovered here illustrates the minimal awareness of specific risk factors associated with indoor tanning. While it is clear that the majority of respondents recognize the health risks related to indoor tanning (Level 1), respondents are unable to articulate the true scope of harmful side effects. As such, an informed decision is impossible to be made based on the likely knowledge of

![FIGURE 1](image-url)

**Risk Perceptions of Indoor Tanning Behaviors**

- **Frequency of Risk Acknowledgment**
  - Literature Supported
  - Respondent Additions

**Indoor Tanning Risks**

- Skin Cancer
- Premature Aging
- Eye Damage
- Burning
- Skin Damage
- Infection
- Addiction
- Waste Money
- Negative Peer Pressure
- Allergies
- Fades Tattoos
- Hair Damage
- Alteration of Immune System
- Reaction to Medication
only one health consequence. While existent warnings on indoor tanning equipment are required to warn of skin and eye damage if left unprotected, other possible side effects remain hidden from consumers.

**Level 3**

The third level to achieving a fully informed choice involves accurately understanding the meaning, severity, and probabilities of developing negative health consequences as related to a given behavior. As such, an individual must not only be fully aware of the risks associated with indoor tanning (Level 2), but must understand the probabilities of developing said diseases. As skin cancer is the most prominently discussed risk to indoor tanning, survey respondents were asked to estimate the likelihood of developing cancer from tanning indoors.

In estimating the risk of developing cancer from indoor tanning practices, study results cite an average risk of 36.75 percent (n = 94), with statistically similar responses from tanners (estimating 39.4% risk) and non-tanners (estimating 35.18% risk) alike ($F(1, 93) = 0.491$, $p > .1$). Further, while both men and women underestimate the likelihood of developing cancer, women (estimating an average likelihood of 45.22%) tend to be more accurate than men (estimating an average likelihood of 27.52%) ($F(1, 93) = 10.186$, $p < .01$). These results show a striking contrast as compared to one’s actual risk of developing skin cancer from indoor tanning devices, noted to be as high as 75 percent (Woo and Eide 2010). Such discrepancy between an individual’s perception of risk versus the risk cited by medical professionals illustrates a glaring gap in Level 3 informed choice. These results demonstrate that even if an individual is aware that indoor tanning is both dangerous to one’s health and can appropriately identify the specific health risks, there exists a lack of accurate knowledge of their chance in developing related health concerns.

**Level 4**

The highest level required for one to make an accurate and fully informed choice involves the personal acceptance of risks noted in Levels 1–3 to one’s own risk of developing said diseases. As Level 3 sought to understand the general probabilities of one developing related health risks, Level 4 requires an individual to understand personal risk from his/her own behaviors. Level 4 is necessary in order to circumvent optimism bias, as individuals are often more likely to believe others maintain a higher risk of harm than themselves.

To assess Level 4 awareness, study respondents were randomly assigned to answer one of two questions; (1) “What is the chance (%) that you will develop cancer from tanning indoors?” or (2) “What is the chance (%) that someone who tans indoors will develop cancer?” Study results, again, illustrate an underestimation of cancer risk for both personal development of cancer (35.46%, n = 46) and someone else’s risk (37.99%, n = 48) (See Table 3). Although these two groups prove similar ($F(1, 93) = .189$, $p > .1$), both estimates remain approximately 40 percent lower than actual assessments of cancer risk. Further, an interesting pattern is seen in cancer risk predictions by (a) individuals who tan indoors and (b) women respondents. When asked to estimate the risks of developing cancer from indoor tanning, tanners estimate an average risk of 43.56 percent for others, but a lesser risk of 36.3 percent for themselves. Additionally, we find a vast difference in predictions by women with an average estimated risk of 54.2 percent for others, but a much lower estimate of 36.6 percent for themselves. Alternatively, males predict lower, similar rates for both themselves (predicted risk of 34.1%) and for others (predicted risk of 21.77%). We find here evidence of optimism bias, as those who tan not only severely underestimate their risk of developing cancer, but also believe others are at a greater risk than themselves.

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings presented in this study illustrate consumers’ inability to make an accurate and informed decision regarding indoor tanning behaviors. While Level 1 awareness exists, study participants failed to present appropriate knowledge of (a) the scope of indoor tanning risks, (b) the risk of developing skin cancer from indoor tanning practices, and (c) clear understanding of personal risks to skin cancer development. Overall, we find that young consumers recognize only one primary risk to indoor tanning, and while albeit a significantly dangerous one, they severely under estimate the susceptibility of cancer development (both personally and for others).

Although statistics illustrate a steady increase of indoor tanning prevalence over the past several years, a recent study has emerged offering the policy field a glimmer of hope in tanning prevention. Hillhouse (2010) proved the effectiveness of properly tailored intervention methods in decreasing indoor tanning among teenagers who exhibit Seasonal Affective Disorder symptoms or pathological tanning motives. This study illustrates that tanning prevention initiatives are not a lost cause; the appropriate medium just has yet to be used.
As discussed above, policy makers have utilized a vast array of policy initiatives with minimal success. Only in recent years has strict policy action been put forth through either regulatory restrictions (primarily age based) or the imposition of taxes. Despite the backlash readily expressed in the popular press (Dwyer 2010), the results of the above study clearly illustrate the need for governmental intervention. As such, it is necessary to find a solution that both encourages behavioral change of those individuals already partaking in indoor tanning behaviors, as well as prevents individuals from beginning to engage in said behavior.

While age restrictions and increasing prices have deferred indoor tanning usage for some consumers (Weintraub 2011), these initiatives fail to increase consumer knowledge and thus perpetuate the lack of informed decision making. Accordingly, reasonable policy shifts are needed to provide consumers, as well as tanning salon proprietors (see Beyth, Hunnicutt, and Alguire 1991) with greater and more accurate information on the dangers and prevalence of indoor tanning behaviors. As is seen with the lack of Level 2–4 awareness, the current study illustrates that not only do individuals over-estimate the prevalence of indoor tanning behaviors, but the risks of said behavior are grossly under-estimated.

It is recommended herein that policy makers need to first ensure that consumers understand the realities of indoor tanning. While the argument stands than an individual has control over their own behavior, the current study clearly articulates the lack of accurate knowledge maintained by individuals (both those who tan and those who do not tan indoors). Although existent policy trends have succeeded in raising awareness of the issue (Level 1 awareness), such awareness remains surface level. Consumers fail to understand the gravity of harm connected to indoor tanning behaviors, and thus action is needed to afford consumers the ability to make informed and accurate decisions on indoor tanning behaviors.

Accordingly, suggestions for information disbursement include increased regulation on indoor tanning advertisements (e.g., mandated health warnings on advertising mediums) and personal acknowledgment of indoor tanning risks by tanning establishments. A unique perspective for improving informed decision making put forth by Chapman and Liberman (2005) suggests licensing individuals to purchase certain products. While discussed from a tobacco perspective, the authors propose that individuals be required to pass a knowledge test before engaging in harmful behaviors. While novel, it is necessary to focus on means through which said information can first be distributed and disseminated through the population. As such, policy directives should target the indoor tanning industry and require more detailed information and warnings to be released to consumers both on advertisements, as well as in the retail setting. While warning labels currently exist on tanning equipment, such advisements are small and often ignored by customers. Instead, indoor tanning customers should be provided with the risks of indoor tanning directly and in a detailed matter. An example of such would alter the wording on labels from “Indoor tanning may be harmful to your health” to “Indoor tanning may increase risk of skin cancer by 75 percent.” More detailed dialogue would provide customers with accurate and sufficient knowledge to make a fully informed behavioral choice.

Addressing these concerns in a mandatory, policy directed manner will prevent the tanning industry from misrepresenting tanning behaviors and further encouraging the misguided assumptions of the general public. Indoor tanning is an important and timely policy concern that must be addressed immediately; a lack of effective and influential policy change in the future will further enable the progressive development of health risks affecting the lives of individuals who continue to frequent indoor tanning salons.

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“INFECTING” THOSE WE CARE ABOUT: SOCIAL NETWORK EFFECTS ON BODY IMAGE

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SUMMARY

According to the Center for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC), eating disorders including anorexia, are a serious yet common problem among college students, especially in females. Prior research indicates that self-image perceptions, media effects, and even genetics are largely responsible for such disorders. We conducted focus groups to delve deeper into why and how self-image perceptions in this media-savvy world influence young women’s perceptions of their bodies and, consequently, their overall health.

Method

Using a grounded theory approach, we conducted focus groups to understand emotions, beliefs, and attitudes in the backdrop of actual behaviors (Andreasen 1995). The objective of the focus group research was to understand the themes that underlie the factors that promote the need for being ultra-thin. The focus group participants – young female adults – presented a rich diversity in terms of their age, course of study, experiences, and familial background. The focus groups, through dissonance reduction intervention, engaged participants in an open conversation about the internalized thin-ideal values. None of the women in the sample currently reported to be suffering from an eating disorder.

Results and Discussion

Data was analyzed using the grounded theory approach (e.g., Glaser and Strauss 1967), and without any preformed hypotheses, we transcribed audio recordings to and analyzed the transcripts of the focus group discussions. Four key themes emerged viz. (1) knowledge of the media initiated and promoted body image, (2) demonstration of internationalization and objectification of women, (3) the other participants in the social environment, and (4) the social contagion effect.

The first three identified categories have been extensively examined in prior literature. What interested us even more was an understanding of the framework within which the first three categories operated, namely the social contagion effect through which the media and social impact operated in the backdrop of self-perceptions.

The Social Contagion Effect: An underlying framework in which all the above-mentioned factors seemed to operate was a network of social relationships that the individual may be said to be embedded in. For example, familial effect on body image promoted body dissatisfaction or self-esteem associated with body image. The media effect with the network was also prominent.

A central theme of the social contagion theory that emerged was the dire need and urgency to be thin spread through observation, message transmission, and modeled learning. This need and urgency was not perhaps self-motivated. In fact, there was a general “fear” of going back into the real world – outside the room where the focus group was conducted. That is, participants were wary of finding their way through the domination of the ultra-thin world – knowing that it was all such a “fake” illustration of life – after interacting with individuals who did not believe in the thin-ideal but “obeyed” the mantra because their social network believed in it.

Reverse Network Effect: While network effects can have a strong hold on individuals, we feel that the negative influences of the network effects can be strengthened by consistently initiating a reverse network effect (Hoeppner 2000) where young females are encouraged to be comfortable with their body size. Our focus group research presented strong evidence of such network effects as noted above.

Future Research

In addition to further exploration of media induced objectification in individual and collective contexts, we plan to investigate the relative strength of the negative appeal of the thin ideal and measure the size and strength of the network effect with respect to the thinness, and then utilize the information to initiate a reversal effect. This would be beneficial, we believe, because individuals are already “invested” in their network. We propose that
training participants in this new way of thinking can initiate a positive change. We did see strong, optimistic response from participants in trying to make a positive impact through spreading the message of there being no need to constantly pursue the ultra-thin-image.

Discussion

While prior research has reported the media as being the “devil” in promoting an unhealthy self-image perception, and the associated quest for ultra-thinness, it is not clear why the media has such a hold on people. In an effort to understand the underlying processes or factors that promote the spread of eating disorders, given the established media effects, we propose that social marketing programs (e.g., Macera 2010) should stress upon healthy eating habits, focusing on the importance of the self, while de-emphasizing the “thin-ideal” image promoted by media, friends, family and power figures in an individual’s network. A thorough review of the focus groups indicates that network effects are critical in the spread of not only thoughts, but also emotions that in turn promote the spread of eating disorders in an effort to keep up with the Joneses in the “body-image” world. Thus, even though the network phenomenon may be said to be largely triggered by the media – both traditional and online – it appears to be strongly promoted by friends, siblings, power figures, and surprisingly, parents too. References are available upon request.

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DESIRING CHANGE: MEDIA USE AND MEN’S BODILY PERCEPTIONS, SEXUALITY, AND THE DESIRE FOR MUSCULARITY

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SUMMARY
While links between female objectification and female body-image issues are well documented, few studies have examined the influences of male objectification on men. Longitudinal content analyses of U.S. media reveal that male representations are increasingly eroticised; their body shapes taking more mesomorphic and muscular forms over time. Some scholars have attempted to make sense of such trends as cultural responses to changing gender roles and norms. Others have suggested – similar to contemporary understandings of female objectification’s effects on women – that male objectification ultimately degrades men and that repeated exposures might harm male audiences’ self-esteem, thereby increasing risks of body-shame anxieties, depression and eating disorders. To this end, past empirical studies have shown positive links between male body dissatisfaction and a range of issues including body-shame, desires for greater muscularity, lower sexual esteem and higher tendencies to abuse bodybuilding steroids. Few studies have, however, examined these issues in relation to media use.

With a view to understand the extent to which media consumption might influence men’s body-image perceptions, sexual esteem and desire for muscles, we surveyed 101 male respondents in Singapore using purposive convenience sampling. Dependent variables (DVs), “sexual esteem” and “drive for muscularity,” were adapted from established scales. “Media use,” the first independent variable (IV), measured the extent to which respondents consume (a) online and (b) offline media, while “body-image discrepancy,” the second IV, measured the difference between how men perceived their present body (a) fat and (b) definition with how they think (i) media personalities should look, (ii) their romantic partners want them to look, and (iii) they ought to look ideally. The variables were subsequently tested using multiple linear regressions.

Our findings reveal a number of interesting insights pertaining to media and body image. First, we did not find any significant associations between offline media and any of the DVs – a result that would seem at odds with past research on media use and body-image issues. This disparity may, however, be explained with the fact that previous studies were mostly centered on men’s magazine consumption while magazines were generally not popular with our sample in Asia. It should be noted too that offline media regulations are stricter within our research environment, which may suggest fewer incidences of male objectification, compared to the US. Most content analyses moreover show a higher tendency for Caucasian males to be objectified whilst Asian males are, more often than not, stereotyped into asexual roles – another factor that might have a bearing on our mostly Asian sample.

Next, we found that media-to-self body-image discrepancy negatively predicted respondents’ drive for muscularity – a suggestion that exposure to idealized media representations might not necessarily influence men in the same ways that are commonly thought to affect women. Respondents also registered significantly weaker sexual esteem and stronger desires for bodily change where partner-to-self body-image discrepancies were high. These findings highlight the potential influence that romantic partners might hold in shaping men’s attitudes towards their bodies. Significant links were found between (a) online media use and body definition discrepancy and (b) online media use and drive for muscularity as well.

Distilling the results, it was found that the social elements of online media had the most significant positive associations with respondents’ motivation for bodily change. We surmised that the ubiquity and ease of access to online social media tools may have accelerated social comparisons, where males (and females) may be unknowingly influencing, affirming and reinforcing body-image stereotypes and attitudes for each other through online interactions – ideas that might ultimately shape behaviors. Taking the findings together, we can conclude that men’s attitudes towards their body-image may have more to do with proximate social influences, rather than media-induced standards. Policymakers and advertisers wishing to
direct men’s body-image perceptions and behaviors might thus consider the influences of relationships and social capital over male objectification. The study also highlighted possible differences in the understandings of masculinity in the East and West, as well as a need to distinguish male objectification research from conventional understandings of female objectification effects.

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ASSESSMENT OF HETEROGENEITY OF COMPULSIVE BUYERS BASED ON IMPULSIVITY AND COMPULSIVITY DIMENSIONS: A LATENT PROFILE ANALYTIC APPROACH

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SUMMARY

One of the issues that have not received much attention in compulsive buying literature is whether compulsive buyers consist of heterogeneous groups or they are more or less one homogeneous group. Empirical investigation of heterogeneity of compulsive buyers has been not only scarce (see DeSarbo and Edwards 1996; for a notable exception) but also largely exploratory. In this manuscript, we fill this gap by assessing the heterogeneity of excessive buyers in the bi-dimensional space represented by the buying compulsivity dimension and the buying impulsivity dimension. Heterogeneity is examined by employing latent profile analysis (LPA: Vermunt and Magidson 2002).

Theory and Hypothesis

The notion that compulsive buyers exhibit buying-specific compulsivity and impulsivity is widely shared among psychiatric researchers (Goldsmith and McElroy 2000; Lejoyeux and Weinstein 2010). However, McElroy et al. (1994) observed that compulsive buyers exhibited a great deal of heterogeneity in impulsive and compulsive features in the buying domain. This led McElroy et al. (1994) to propose the diagnostic criteria for compulsive buying, which required either the presence of strong impulse to buy or obsessive-compulsive thoughts/behavior, but not necessarily both. Thus, we expect that heterogeneity of compulsive buyers can be fruitfully assessed by extracting segments of individuals that differ from one another in the degree of buying compulsivity and buying impulsivity. Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to investigate heterogeneity of compulsive buyers in the bi-dimensional space, anchored by buying compulsivity dimension and buying impulsivity dimension.

By extending the motivation shift model from the addiction literature (Koob and Volkow 2010) to compulsive buying, we hypothesize that considerable heterogeneity will be identified along the dimensions of impulsivity and compulsivity (H1). Specifically, we hypothesize that a cluster of compulsive buyers would reveal strong impulsivity and weak compulsivity, and that their main motive of buying is to seek pleasure (i.e., positive reinforcement motive). This cluster can be termed “impulsive excessive buyers,” in that their compulsivity is presumed to be still low. On the other hand, other compulsive buyers with more severe buying problems may have experienced the motivational shift to compulsivity combined with impulsivity. Thus, we hypothesize that compulsive buyers with more severe buying problems will exhibit high compulsivity as well as high impulsivity, which can be termed “compulsive-impulsive buyers.” Furthermore, we hypothesize that the cluster with high compulsivity would have stronger predisposition of global self devaluation (i.e., shame-proneness) than other clusters (H2), whereas the cluster with high impulsivity/low compulsivity would be characterized by stronger materialistic values and lower self-control trait than ordinary consumers (H3).

Method

A survey of a recent buying lapse was conducted (N=480). Participants were asked to describe the buying lapse in detail and fill out several scales including the Compulsive Buying Index (CBI) (Ridgway, Kukar-Kinney and Monroe 2008), the Test of Self-Conscious Affect-3 scale (Tangney, Dearing, Wagner, and Gramzow 2000), materialism scale (Richins and Dawson 1992), and the trait Self-Control Scale (Tangney, Baumeister, and Boone 2004).

Results

The heterogeneity of compulsive buyers was assessed via LPA of the compulsivity and impulsivity of the CBI. Dispositional variables were entered as covariates into the LPA model. The three latent class model fit the data the best: the segment with high compulsivity and high impulsivity, the segment with low compulsivity and high impulsivity, and the segment with low compulsivity and low impulsivity. This pattern of heterogeneity was consistent with H1, in that the first two segments were equivalent to the a priori clusters of the “compulsive-impulsive buyer” (represented in quadrant D) and “impulsive excessive buyers” (represented in quadrant B). Furthermore, the...
former segment exhibited significantly higher score on Faber and O’Guinn’s (1992) Compulsive Buying Scale than the latter segment. Finally, the segment with low compulsivity and low impulsivity was considered non-excessive buyers.

Furthermore, consistent with H2, the covariate LPA model showed that compulsive-impulsive buyers had significantly higher shame-proneness than impulsive excessive buyer. H3 was also supported by the finding that impulsive excessive buyers had significantly higher materialistic beliefs and lower trait self-control than non-excessive buyers.

**Discussion**

Our findings indicate that compulsive buyers consist of two segments: those with high buying compulsivity/high impulsivity and those with low compulsivity/high impulsivity. The finding that the “compulsive-impulsive buyers” had significantly lower shame-proneness attests to the possibility that their buying is more motivated by internal trigger (i.e., chronic experience of mounting tension and pressure to buy independent of the shopping environment) (Faber and O’Guinn 2008) compared with the “impulsive excessive buyer” segment. References are available upon request.

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ABSTRACT

We used discrete choice experiments to model U.K. preferences for crime sentence components. We identified different segments and the implied extra taxes they will pay to change sentences. They traded-off prison time for time in other activities or more victim compensation, and will pay modest extra taxes for this.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to describe and discuss a “proof-of-concept” study using discrete choice experiments (DCEs, Louviere, Hensher, and Swait 2000) to quantify citizen preferences and tradeoffs for components of crime sentences. Criminal justice systems are an essential public service, and changes to sentences can be viewed as service changes. Thus, predicting citizen support for a new product/service can be viewed as a new product/service demand forecasting problem. We quantify citizen preferences and willingness-to-pay for sentence components and capture latent, underlying individual differences in preferences or choice consistency (“unobserved heterogeneity”) using a relatively new analytical approach called Scale-Adjusted Latent Class Models (SALCM). Preference and choice consistency differences matter because they result in non-constant error variability, forcing one to jointly model preferences and error variability to obtain unbiased model estimates.

Many countries have had higher levels of incarceration for several years; the more people jailed, the higher overall costs because courts hear more cases, offenders get more rehab time, etc. Cash-strapped governments seek savings like less jail time, which involves tradeoffs. It would be desirable to have taxpayers/citizens preferences as input to such public policy decisions. We show one way to do this using choice-based measurement methods called “discrete choice experiments” (DCEs, Louviere, and Woodworth 1983; Louviere, Hensher, and Swait 2000). The specific application is modeling preferences for changing several crime sentence components in the U.K., with robbery as the case study.

There is a trend to better understand and use “public views” in sentencing policy (e.g., public consultation of sentencing proposals in the U.K., Sentencing Guidelines Council 2011; Roberts 2008 discusses other countries) by using various quantitative and qualitative survey methods (e.g., Freiberg and Gelb 2008). We extend prior work that provides contextual information on offences, salient offender and victim characteristics (e.g., Hough et al. 2009).

We sampled nearly 2000 people representative of the population of England and Wales, and asked questions about sentencing preferences for five crimes: (1) robbery (street mugging); (2) domestic burglary; (3) grievous bodily harm with intent to wound; (4) causing death by dangerous driving; and (5) supply of cannabis. We included a (tax) cost for each sentencing option to allow us to estimate public willingness-to-pay (WTP) for changes. Prior work asked if crime sentences were “too lenient” without telling people that tougher ones typically cost more. Thus, one must ask if “the public” will pay for longer sentences.

We developed DCE surveys to quantify WTP, resulting in three key contributions:

1. Estimating the value to people of changes in custody length, or a mix of custody and a community sentence. “Value” is the average amount that people are WTP for a change.

2. Quantifying differences in preferences for sentencing options to accurately reflect differences in the population, rather than assume one size fits all.

3. Taking choice variability into account to avoid incorrect inferences about preferences.
PRIOR WORK

Much prior work tested ideas about public views about offending and sentencing policy (see Murana and King 2004; Roberts 2008; Roberts and Hough 2005) Australia (Roberts and Indermaur 2007), Switzerland (Hammer et al. 2009), the Netherlands (de Keijser, van Koppen, and Elffers 2007; de Keijser and Elffers 2009), Canada (Doob 2000) and the U.K. (Hough et al. 2009). van Dijk et al. (2005) surveyed 18 EU countries about appropriate sentences for a “repeat offence” burglar.

Some work studied “penal populism” (Bottoms 1995); or whether trends responded to public demand for tougher sentences. Researchers tended to ask how broad the support for alternatives to custody was (e.g., Doob 2000; Roberts and Stalans 2004), consistently finding that people tended to have harsher sentencing views in simple opinion polls than with more detailed/in-depth survey methods (e.g., de Keijser, van Koppen, and Elffers 2007; Freiberg and Gelb 2008). Other work asked respondents to choose among different sentence options (e.g., Mattinson and Mirrlees-Black 2000; de Keijser, van Koppen, and Elffers 2007), such as giving respondents descriptions of offences and offenders and asking them to sentence them in light of potentially relevant aggravating/mitigating factors (Hough et al. 2009). This work did not include the cost implications of potential sentence policy changes.

A few studies tried to include cost information, such as Doob (2000) who asked Canadians to choose between custody and non-custody options for first-time burglary offenders, giving half explicit information about prison costs and half no information. Hough et al. (2009) asked if custody and non-custody option costs were relevant for assault or social security fraud sentences, and reported respondents seemed to heed costs.

DCEs and similar stated preference methods are widely used in marketing and applied economics (e.g., Kanninen 2007; Louviere et al. 2000) to measure how much people will pay for specific policy change benefits, such as water quality improvements, risk reductions to human health, Alpine habitat restoration, etc. (e.g., Carson 2011; Mitchell and Carson 2005; Scarpa et al. 2011). We found few uses of DCE methods in crime/criminal justice, but there are a few applications of the contingent valuation (CV) method that offers people a proposed policy change and asks if they will pay an amount for the change (e.g., Alberini and Kahn 2006; Mitchell and Carson 2005). These include Nagin et al. (2006), who valued rehabilitation vs. incarceration of U.S. juvenile offenders, Cohen, Rust, and Steen (2006), who valued allocating extra resources to crime control and prevention policies, Ludwig and Cook (2001) and Atkinson et al. (2005), who respectively valued risk reductions for gun crimes and violent assault, and Cohen et al. (2004), who valued policies to reduce burglary, armed robbery, sexual assault and murder.

We know of no DCE surveys in criminal justice/sentencing. DCE surveys ask people to choose their most preferred from sets of different policy options, with options described by several components (attributes) that vary across options. DCEs deal with multi-component changes and trade-offs because the values vary across options, so DCEs are well-suited to measure preferences for sentencing options. DCE surveys can include cost (tax) components for sentencing options, allowing one to estimate WTP for components or changes in them. They also can capture differences in preferences, which is important to avoid bias and misinference about public preferences and measures like WTP. We return to this later.

RESEARCH APPROACH

We studied choices between new sentence options and a status quo sentence. Status quo was determined by relevant Sentencing Guideline Council (2004a, 2004b, 2006, 2008, 2011) and Sentencing Advisory Board (2009) documents. The options described changes from the “status quo” in terms of: (a) prison sentence, (b) intensive supervision and restricted behavior, (c) community service, (d) rehabilitation and treatment and (e) victim compensation. Any sentence option can be viewed as a combination of the components. DCE survey choices reveal tradeoffs and preferences because they are constructed using discrete multivariate statistical designs (e.g., Louviere and Woodworth 1983). We used two designs: (1) 8 pairs of sentence options with only extreme levels of sentence/tax and the other component levels (common pairs); (2) 64 pairs from a fractional factorial design (randomly allocating a person to a version with 8 pairs). The survey had several sections that we do not discuss due to space limitations, but details are available from the authors. We recruited a random sample of 1176 people aged 18+ from the Pureprofile U.K. panel, and 976 agreed to participate. We eliminated 16 people for incomplete surveys or excluded postcodes; for a sample size of 960 (81.5%).

The most costly component is prison time, and cost varies with sentence length; so, we “linked” prison time to tax rebates/increases. Sentence length (in months) had four levels: two levels of tax depended on sentence length; a fourth level was no tax. Other components each had four levels. Each person “saw” 16 sentence option pairs: a common set of 8 and one version of 8 from the 64 pair surveys.
design (8 versions of 8 pairs); a status quo option was added to each pair (i.e., three options per set). A typical choice set is shown in Figure 1.

**RESULTS**

We crosstab choices to obtain the average choice responses to each component level (choice counts) because DCEs are incomplete crosstab tables. More sophisticated analysis was used (latent class) to calculate WTP for component levels and status quo policy changes.

**Preferences for Sentencing Options**

DCEs produce discrete choices. Discrete choice models are due to McFadden (1974), with recent developments discussed by Louviere, Hensher, and Swait (2000), Train (2003) and Hensher, Rose, and Green (2005). The theory assumes individuals associate a latent utility (U) with each choice option. For the three options in the DCE survey we have:

\[ U_1 = V_1 + e_1, \quad U_2 = V_2 + e_2, \quad \text{and} \quad U_3 = V_3 + e_3 \]

Option 1 is the status quo; options 2 and 3 vary across choice sets, V is the mean utility and e an associated error. Simple models assume errors with mean zero and constant variance, more sophisticated models assume distributions of effects like Latent Classes (e.g., Magidson and Vermunt 2007) or random parameters (e.g., Train 2003) and/or distributions of error variances (e.g., Feibig et al. 2010). We used a generalized regression function to specify the latent utilities for components as follows:

\[ V_1 = 0 \text{ (status quo)}, \quad V_2 = a_{NSQ} + b_1X_1, \quad \text{and} \quad V_3 = a_{NSQ} + b_1X_1 \]

Options 2 and 3 have common intercepts \((a_{NSQ})\) and preference estimates \((b_1)\)'s; \(X_1\)'s are component levels. We tabulated sample choices for each component level, as shown in Table 1 (Total counts = 3840, except tax x sentence = 1920). The counts suggest non-linear responses to some sentence components (e.g., non-community service, non-sentence/non-tax). Sentence length/tax counts suggest a peak near 6 months sentence reduction, and tax sensitivity increases as sentences increase. Counts can mask potential individual differences, which a Latent Class analysis can detect.

**FIGURE 1**

**A Typical Choice Set**

### Scenario 1 of 16

Charlie, a 19 year-old man, has been convicted of robbery following a street mugging incident. Along with two others, Charlie stole a mobile telephone and a portable music (i-pod mp3) player from a 16 year-old boy as he walked home from after-school football practice. The theft included Charlie making violent threats to the boy but no weapon was involved. Charlie has no prior convictions for any crimes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Option A (Typical Sentence)</th>
<th>Option B</th>
<th>Option C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Prison sentence</td>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>0 months</td>
<td>5 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Intensive supervision &amp; restricted behaviour</td>
<td>0 months (supervision, curfew, tagging)</td>
<td>0 months (supervision, curfew, tagging)</td>
<td>18 months (supervision, curfew, tagging)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3) Community service</td>
<td>0 months</td>
<td>0 months</td>
<td>12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Rehabilitation &amp; treatment</td>
<td>0 months (anger management)</td>
<td>0 months (anger management)</td>
<td>8 months (anger management)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Compensation to victim</td>
<td>£0</td>
<td>£0</td>
<td>£2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra tax per household per year</td>
<td>£0</td>
<td>a decrease of £20</td>
<td>a decrease of £50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To review sentence components again, please [click here](#).
A Scale-Adjusted Latent Class Model (SALCM) for Sentencing Choices

We used SALCM (Magidson and Vermunt 2007) to estimate $S$ scale (error variance) x $P$ preference (utility) estimate classes by varying $S = 1$ to 4 and $P = 1$ to 5. We selected $S = 3$ and $P = 5$ using the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC). SALCM captures scale differences, avoiding confounding scale and parameters (Fiebig et al. 2010). The results are in Table 2.

We can estimate WP for a hypothetical policy change for street robbery, such as a change from a status quo 12 month prison sentence to 6 months prison; 12 months intensive supervision; 12 months community service; 4 months rehabilitation and treatment; and, £1000 fine/compensation paid to victim. The results are in Table 3 below.

Each class a WTP for each component. The total WTP for the policy change (last row of table) is the sum of all component (WTP) values for the change. So, Class 1 has a WTP of £50.80 for the change, while Class 3 will pay only £5.06. Class 3 prefers the status quo, while Class 1 prefers shorter custody periods. Class 2 also has a high average WTP (£43.85), with Class 4 at £33.50 and Class 5 will pay a modest £12.43 above the status quo. The sample WTP is a weighted average of the class estimates (£30.15), or the average amount they will pay for the change. One can calculate similar WTP values for different combinations of component levels to evaluate potential policy changes.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

We showed that one can ask citizens to choose among sentencing options. Citizens rarely are asked to make choices involving tradeoffs in public opinion surveys. DCEs are well-tested, theory-driven ways to model public tradeoffs. Our results suggest several groups of citizens differ in preferences/tradeoffs for sentence options, and that they are willing to pay sensible amounts of more/fewer taxes to achieve particular outcomes. Our results have been part of the ongoing debate about sentencing policy in the UK.

We showed a crime sentence can be decomposed into policy-relevant components, and the value of each component and particular component levels can be valued with DCEs. Many other public goods/services can be evaluated in this way, offering a powerful new way to input citizen preferences into policy evaluations. For example, we recently studied public preferences for new types of housing in three major Australian cities, allowing developers and public policy makers to consider options that people prefer and can afford.
### TABLE 2
Results of 3 Scale and 5 Preference Class Model Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Class 1</th>
<th>Class 2</th>
<th>Class 3</th>
<th>Class 4</th>
<th>Class 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>n = 80</td>
<td>n = 341</td>
<td>n = 184</td>
<td>n = 216</td>
<td>n = 137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ASC 1.967</td>
<td>1.858</td>
<td>.170</td>
<td>1.099</td>
<td>.304</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prison</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0 months</td>
<td>-.351</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>-.654</td>
<td>-.375</td>
<td>-1.497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>.145</td>
<td>.288</td>
<td>.520</td>
<td>.202</td>
<td>.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>.322</td>
<td>.134</td>
<td>.734</td>
<td>.238</td>
<td>.748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18 months</td>
<td>-.116</td>
<td>-.554</td>
<td>-.599</td>
<td>-.065</td>
<td>.721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tax (prison = 0)</td>
<td>-.351</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>-.654</td>
<td>-.375</td>
<td>-1.497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.116</td>
<td>-.554</td>
<td>-.599</td>
<td>-.065</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tax (prison = 6)</td>
<td>-.351</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>-.654</td>
<td>-.375</td>
<td>-1.497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.116</td>
<td>-.554</td>
<td>-.599</td>
<td>-.065</td>
<td>.721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tax (prison = 18)</td>
<td>-.351</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>-.654</td>
<td>-.375</td>
<td>-1.497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>-.554</td>
<td>-.599</td>
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<td>.721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Intensive</td>
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<td>-.599</td>
<td>-.065</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Supervision &amp;</td>
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<td>-1.497</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>.133</td>
<td>-.654</td>
<td>-.375</td>
<td>-1.497</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.116</td>
<td>-.554</td>
<td>-.599</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>0 months</td>
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<td>.133</td>
<td>-.654</td>
<td>-.375</td>
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</tr>
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<td>-.554</td>
<td>-.599</td>
<td>-.065</td>
<td>.721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Service</td>
<td>-.351</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>-.654</td>
<td>-.375</td>
<td>-1.497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.116</td>
<td>-.554</td>
<td>-.599</td>
<td>-.065</td>
<td>.721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rehab &amp; Treatment</td>
<td>-.351</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>-.654</td>
<td>-.375</td>
<td>-1.497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.116</td>
<td>-.554</td>
<td>-.599</td>
<td>-.065</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Victim Compensation</td>
<td>-.351</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.116</td>
<td>-.554</td>
<td>-.599</td>
<td>-.065</td>
<td>.721</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The model results suggest the following interpretation of the classes:

- **Class 1**: Large ASC means less status quo choices; they prefer more victim compensation.
- **Class 2**: Next highest ASC, so less status quo choices; they dislike longer sentences, dislike reduced taxes and are concerned about rehab and treatment.
- **Class 3**: Smallest ASC, so most likely to choose status quo; they prefer longer sentences, and are least willing to pay for sentences over 12 months.
- **Class 4**: Moderate ASC, and more sensitive to intensive supervision and tax differences.
- **Class 5**: Relatively low ASC, so status quo more likely; like longer prison sentences, highly sensitive to tax and sensitive to intensive supervision.
REFERENCES


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NOT MY FATHER’S UNIVERSITY: THE UNIVERSITY, THE MARKET, AND ACADEMIC IDEALS

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John P. Workman, Jr., Creighton University, Omaha

SUMMARY

“American higher education began as an effort at moral uplift. It continues as an effort to get a good or better job. A life of affluence is replacing a philosophy of life as the main purpose of higher education,” (Kerr 2001, p. 221).

Clark Kerr was one of the most influential people in U.S. higher education in the 20th Century, as our opening quote indicates, he became increasingly concerned about the changing purpose of higher education. His growing concerns were reflected in the tone of the prefaces and concluding chapters he added to his classic Uses of the University (Kerr 1963) in later editions.

Following in the path of his growing concern have been a large number of books over the past ten years by faculty and administrators (e.g., Bok 2003; Kirp 2003; Arum and Roska 2011) as well as articles in the marketing literature such as “Marketing Miseducation and the MBA Mind: Bullshit Happens” (Holbrook 2005). On the student side, recent books such as Kirn (2009)’s Lost in the Meritocracy and Douthat’s (2005) Privilege indicate concern with the quality of education. What these various publications have in common is an expression of a growing concern about the growing influence of market forces in the academy. There is also concern that the shift toward private gain, potentially at the cost of public benefit, is leading to an increasingly utilitarian mindset among students, faculty, and administrators. Universities have become places to get ahead. As these authors observe, a shift to a utilitarian mindset and a loss of ideals concerning the purpose of colleges and universities has negative consequences for society.

This utilitarian mindset is wholly evident in what Burton Clark called the entrepreneurial model for the university (Clark 1998). This model is characterized by the maximization of the potential for commercialization of ideas and value creation in society and does not view these actions as significant threats to academic values (Clark 2004). Over time the term “Entrepreneurial University” has been used in a more critical sense to describe a host of institutional activities that are viewed as threats to academic values such as corporatization of research programs and very close institutional ties between corporations and the University. Institutions of higher education increasingly turned to corporate models of management to provide new sources of revenues and ensure efficient and effective operations. This brought a host of changes to what were heretofore non-market enterprises, including the adoption of the tenants of a market orientation. The debatable element of this model is whether it is possible to do as Clark advocates (transform the university by becoming entrepreneurial and market driven) and yet still hold onto core academic values. This transition to a more responsive and entrepreneurial model of the university began well before Clark’s 1998 book and it has taken time for the effects to become apparent. It may be that growth and expansion of the higher education system hid some of the deleterious effects of the entrepreneurial model of higher education for a time. However, with slowed growth, increasing global competition, and severe resource constraints in recent years, the impact of this shift is becoming more evident.

Perhaps no group has evidenced this change more visibly then the student population. Now that student tuition and fee dollars are crucial for the survival of not only private institutions but also of public institutions, the relationship between the student and the institution has changed. Coupled with the rapidly increasing costs of higher education, there are inevitable differences in the values that today’s students place on higher education versus students of fifty years ago. These values often are market based values and focus on private gain and the return on the investment in higher education. These utilitarian values are often in conflict with the stated academic values to which many universities aspire.

In this paper, we use historical analysis, secondary data, and qualitative research to argue that the trend toward privileging market values over academic values has been a gradual, evolutionary process. We further claim that this was an unintended consequence of demographic, economic, and social changes, as well as policy choices of state and federal governments. In contrast to scholars that draw on postmodern, critical, or Marxist theories to explain changes in higher education (e.g., Aronowitz 2000; Bousquet 2008; Fish 2008), we stay within a mainstream rational choice framework. References are available upon request.
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INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION MARKETING STRATEGIES IN RECRUITING FIRST GENERATION AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS

Samantha Evans, American Public University Systems, Chambersburg

ABSTRACT

This research focuses on qualitative interview techniques to better understand marketing methods to attract first generation African American students. The research is both exploratory and descriptive to provide a more in-depth understanding of the college process and decisions made. Twelve participants were interviewed and asked a series of questions to better understand their college decision making process. The results of this study made it clear that first generation African American students have a more positive result with face to face sales people then with other forms of advertising. Furthermore, they require a more active enrollment or guidance counselor during the admissions process. Altogether, these findings will help institutions of higher education to better market to this target market.

INTRODUCTION

First-generation college students represent an important group in college. “Often considered ‘at-risk’ in academic persistence and retention discussions, these students present both a challenge and opportunity to postsecondary education” (Hand and Payne 2008, p. 6). These students are unique in the sense that they are the first in their family to enter into higher education. They have the opportunity to be the first in their families to achieve this goal, but it can be more challenging to recruit these individuals as they have a lot working against them. Being the first in the family leaves a lot of room for uncertainty and inexperience. This can be detrimental in not only recruiting these students, but also in retaining them. “First-generation students are likely to enter college with less academic preparation and to have limited access to information about the college experience, either firsthand or from relatives” (Thayer 2000, p. 4).

Compounding with the struggles that the first-generation college student faces, first-generation African American students have their own barriers to overcome.

Credle and Dean’s study (1991) found the following: The barriers can be categorized as lack of orientation toward the culture of black students; lack of awareness of the needs of black students; the inability to respond to the needs of black students; inappropriate academic standards for black students; inability to help black students survive in the complex systems of the institution and finally, negative attitudes toward black students by faculty, staff, and administrators. (p. 160).

With the many different universities, community colleges, branch campuses, and online colleges; higher education has become a competitive field with enrolling students being their common goal. Universities have now developed aggressive marketing and advertising strategies to recruit the best students. Higher education institutions valuing diversity often create additional marketing efforts to attract under-represented groups. These under-represented groups include African Americans, Hispanics, women, first generation college students and non-traditional students. “Given the politically charged atmosphere that surrounds affirmative action programs at institutions of higher education, it is essential for educators who value diversity to implement the best practices for recruiting, retaining and graduating students from under-represented groups (Waddell, D).”

To obtain the goal of a diverse educational facility it is important that higher education facilities focus on eliminating some of the barriers that first-generation African American students face. It is important for these facilities to focus on both the underrepresented first-generation group and also the African American group. Focusing on the barriers for enrolling both of these underrepresented groups to attract students that are both first-generation and African American is very important. Once these barriers have been discovered higher education facilities can then work on ways to overcome these barriers and in turn enroll more students. Not only will this help to ease the admissions process for the students, this will also help higher education facilities to increase enrollment. The school that can best overcome these barriers will most likely have the highest increase in enrollment among first generation African American students. In turn their student body will reap the benefit from learning in a more diverse atmosphere.
To create a diverse campus atmosphere it is important for colleges to focus on the types of recruitment methods that are appealing to that particular group of individuals. A marketing technique that works with one segment of students may not be as successful with another. There is no such thing as a one size fits all marketing plan. When targeting many different types of people it is important to use a multi-faceted marketing approach. This multi-faceted approach will target each group individually. After the plan is created it is important to see if the plan actually works on its target audience. When targeting first generation African American students it is important for higher education institutions to realize how well their marketing plan is actually attracting this group of students.

This dissertation focuses on higher education marketing strategies in recruiting first generation African American students. In discovering these marketing strategies I am focusing on answering research questions pertaining to the student’s academic experience. The students are encouraged to share any information that they feel will be pertinent to this study. Sharing their experiences and situations that affected their college admissions process will help the researcher get a better understanding on their overall process. In addition, the students may share information about schools they did not go to, because of the barriers that were presented to them. In this study it will be important to note not only what is attracting first generation African American students, but also what is turning them away.

**BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Diversity in a classroom brings together many different views, backgrounds and perspectives allowing a breeding ground for higher education minds. The more perspectives and backgrounds a higher education institution has, the more well rounded the institution is. “Given the politically charged atmosphere that surrounds affirmative action programs at institutions of higher education, it is essential for educators who value diversity to implement the best practices for recruiting, retaining and graduating students from under-represented groups” (Waddell 2008, Para 2).

To create an environment this diverse it is important that the higher education institutions have marketing strategies specifically targeting underrepresented groups. Historically black colleges have had a lot of success in marketing to first-generation African American students, but predominantly white colleges have not had as much success. Attrition of black students from predominantly white institutions is a tremendous problem (Thomas 2007). Utilizing marketing strategies that specifically market to first-generation African American students will help the predominantly white institutions to have similar success as the historically black colleges in recruiting this group. Almost every marketing campaign has a unique campaign targeting different segments of people; higher education should not be any different. When moving into the Indian market McDonalds drastically changed their marketing approach and product.

“McDonald’s has continually adapted to the customer’s tastes, value systems, lifestyle, language and perception. Globally McDonald’s was known for its hamburgers, beef and pork burgers. Most Indians are barred by religion not to consume beef or pork. To survive, the company had to be responsive to the Indian sensitivities. So McDonalds came up with chicken, fish, and lamb burgers to suite the Indian palate” (Ghosh 2009).

This is an example of how McDonalds used marketing research to alter their plan for a specific group. It is important that institutions of higher education also realize that it is important to alter marketing and advertising practices while trying to appeal to different populations of people.

**First Generation African Americans in Higher Education**

The number of African Americans enrolling in higher education goes up each year; however, this increase is not matching the increase in other racial groups. “Today nearly 4.6 million African Americans hold a four-year college degree, yet the racial gap in degree attainments remains large and it does not appear to be shrinking” (Edwards 2009, p. 3). Holding a college degree can drastically change the lifetime earning potential of a person.

USA Today (2000) found the following:

A Census Bureau survey released Thursday shows a college graduate can expect to earn $2.1 million working full-time between ages 25 and 64, which demographers call a typical work-life period. A master’s degree-holder is projected to earn $2.5 million, while someone with a professional degree, such as a doctor or lawyer, could make even more – $4.4 million. (Para. 1)

By targeting first generation African American students the higher education institutions are helping to create an environment where earning potentials can be equal for all
people. This can help to increase the socio-economic status of the race.

MARKETING STRATEGIES

“An ongoing challenge for colleges and universities is to adapt to addressing the needs of their changing populations” (Waddell 2008, Para. 3). With this changing population, higher education institutions can no longer apply a one size fits all marketing campaign. It is important that these institutions use multiple strategies to appeal to a diverse student body. Those who assume that African Americans who are both middle age and middle class watch pretty much the same movies and TV programs and read the same newspapers and magazines as do their white counterparts do so at their own peril (Lesser 2005). To target a specific group of people the higher education institutions need to look at what the race is watching and reading. They also need to consider what modes of marketing are most attractive to the target market.

RESEARCH PROBLEM AND PURPOSE

“Underscoring the significant correlation between more education and higher salaries, the Commerce Department’s Census Bureau today reported in a new study that, in 1997, adults age 18 and over with a bachelor’s degree earned an average of $40,478 a year, while those with only a high school diploma earned $22,895 (U.S. Census Bureau 2001).” It is clear that a bachelor’s degree drastically changes the income potential of an individual. Graduate degrees further separate the earning potentials from the high school educated. Socioeconomic status is undoubtedly impacted by the level of education that a person possesses.

To raise the socioeconomic status of the race it is important to raise the number of African Americans graduating from college. Increasing the number of African Americans graduating from college will be beneficial to the race in three main ways. First, having a bachelor’s degree helps on average to increase an individual’s income by nearly 50 percent. Having this increase in income will boost the socioeconomic status of the individual. Next, one of the first steps in creating a diverse campus atmosphere is to have a diverse teaching staff. Increasing the number of African American graduates will help to increase the number of potential professors. Finally, having college educated parents increases the chances that a child will go on to higher education. This will increase the cycle of educating more African American students.

Going to college provides much more than higher socioeconomic status, money and better employment. Additional school will provide education and skills that can be used for the rest of their life. In addition, this is often the time when young students figure out what they are passionate about in life. After they find out what they are passionate about, they then have the opportunity to take specialized courses to enable them to have that particular career. Furthermore, it helps to prove the potential of many students. Taking specialized courses in subjects that the students are passionate about, sometimes prove that a once “average” student actually has much more potential when they are in a field of their choice. Finally, it gives students the chance to be exposed to new people, places and ideas. Studying in a diverse atmosphere gives students a wide variety of opinions, ideas and experiences. Often many of these rewards are missed when a student decides against college.

To raise the number of first generation African American college graduates these individuals must first enroll in college. There are many barriers that both first generation and African American students face when entering into college. The purpose of this study is to determine what marketing or recruiting efforts should be used by higher education institutions to attract more first generation African American students. Determining marketing strategies that appeal to first generation African Americans will help boost higher education enrollment of first generation African American students and will also help universities to save money on wasted marketing efforts. In addition to the duel effort for the student and the universities it will also help to provide all students with a more diverse learning atmosphere which will help to enrich education for all students.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The overall research object is to discover: Which marketing strategies are influencing first generation African American students in making their higher education selection? By answering this question the research hopes to get a better understanding of how different marketing strategies influence first generation African American students while choosing a higher education institution. This will help higher education institutions to identify effective strategies and will help to cut down on wasted marketing efforts. “Our research shows that marketing spending by all companies this year will be somewhat larger than the contribution to the gross domestic product of the entire finance and insurance industry” (Blackfriars Communications 2005, p. 2).

In addition to understanding which marketing strategies are influencing first generation African American students, it is important to understand if there are any strat-
egies that are not memorable or furthermore even discour-
age enrollment. Anything creating a negative reaction from the students is important so the practices can be discontinued immediately.

Although there are many features of each institution, it is important to understand which features are deemed most important to this segment of students. Advertisements and marketing strategies can only address a limited amount of information. Understanding what features are important to the students will help the marketers to pinpoint what information needs to be showcased in the marketing pieces. Furthermore, features that are deemed to be less important by the students will not be marketed.

Finally, it is important to understand which if any barriers to entry existed for the students. Overcoming the barriers is key to get a higher enrollment. By better understanding the barriers or struggles that the students went through, the schools can work harder on overcoming the barriers, and work that into their marketing approaches.

**CONCLUSION**

There are reoccurring themes that came up when interviewing the twelve students. The first question asked during the interviews was about the influencing factors, and how the students made their higher education decisions. Choosing a school that was within five hours of their home was mentioned as an influencing factor by ten of the twelve interviewees. This is important for schools to note as they are creating their marketing campaigns. Creating campaigns that target a 5-hour geographic radius from the campus may help them to reach more of their target audiences. Further more, outside this 5-hour radius may require a completely different campaign.

Next, four students listed flexible classroom hours as an influencing factor when they made their higher education decisions. Having non-traditional classroom hours is offered by most schools, but it is important that the schools are advertising this. Knowing that having evening, weekend, and online classes is important to this target market should help the higher education institutions in creating marketing plans to solicit first generation African American students.

Four students listed the availability of joining minority groups as something that influenced their higher education decision. The literature review supported this by saying minority students are more likely to attend schools where other minorities are. One of the interviewees mentioned not choosing a school because they did not see any minorities on the campus. It is important not only for campuses to offer minority groups, but to showcase them during campus visits. If a student does not see any of these groups during a campus visit they may assume that the groups do not exist.

Four students mentioned they choose their school for their majors. Although the students interviewed had a wide variety of majors it seems this was a big factor to all of them when choosing a school. To attract a wide variety of students, it is important for institutions of higher education to offer an array of majors, and also to market these courses to incoming students.

Finally, two of the students mentioned the offering of a head start program influencing their decisions into higher education. The literature confirmed that many of the students would be worried socially and academically about higher education because they are the first, they do not have anyone to show them the ropes. Having the head start program allowed the students to get acclimated to their new environment before the fall rush of new students came. This program can be beneficial to many apprehensive first-generation students. This can help higher education institutions to attract first generation African-American students by not only offering the program but also marketing the program, and its benefits.

The second question asked during the interview was about assistance during their admission process. All twelve students interviewed admitted to needing assistance during the process. Ten of the students had an admissions representative from the school that helped them during their process. Having active and knowledgeable admissions representatives will aid in attracting first generation African-American students. Having parents who are unfamiliar with the process makes the processes a little more challenging. The institutions of higher education that have the outgoing admission representatives willing to help will certainly have an edge on the institutions with more passive admissions representatives.

Three of the students mention that their high school counselor helped them during their admissions process. From marketing standpoint it is important that institutions of higher education develop a solid relationship with the guidance counselors in the area. If students are seeking advice from guidance counselors it is important that the counselors are familiar with the institutions admission process.

The third question during the interview addressed the student’s barriers to admission and how they overcome the barriers. The biggest barrier to admission that the students faced was a lack of preparation. “Research indi-
icates that students whose parents did not attend college are more likely than their non first-generation counterparts to be less academically prepared for college, to have less knowledge of how to apply for college and for financial assistance, and to have more difficulty in acclimating themselves to college once they enroll (Tym et al. 2004).” Often preparation for college begins before a student ever enters high school, and unless the student is aware of college expectations the may not realize they have not enrolled in the correct classes for them to be college bound. Institutions of higher educations should take this down fall and attract first generations by offering courses to catch them up during the summer, instead of just turning them away. This is a great marketing piece to attract this target market.

Two of the students mention having financial barriers. Having educated admission representatives that can inform students of the many different payment options while enable students to make the best choices for their situation. First generation African American students need to be educated on the different types of government grants, loan programs, and payment options that are available.

Needing flexible classroom hours was a barrier mentioned by two of the students.

“First generation students are more likely to be older, have lower incomes, be married and have dependents compared with non first generation students. They are more likely to enroll in postsecondary education part time, and more likely to attend nontraditional education settings. First-generation students were more likely than non-first-generation students to say that being very well off financially and providing their children with better opportunities than they had were very important to them personally. They were also more likely to say that obtaining the amount of financial aid they need, being able to complete course work more quickly, being able to live at home, and being able to work while attending school were very important influences in their decision to attend their particular post secondary institution” (Nunez and Cuccaro-Alamin 1998).

Given that first generation students have other financial obligations, a flexible schedule may be needed due to conflicts with their jobs, family, or other obligations. Flexible classroom schedules are important to attract students of all backgrounds.

One student listed social worriers as a barrier to admittance. Having a head start program can alleviate some of the social worriers that the students have. Marketing this program to some of the students who are not sure what to expect from higher education may really boost enrollment for the institution. This allows the students to ease into the program and allows them to meet other minority students.

One student listed lack of family support as a barrier to admittance. It is difficult to enter into a new venture without having support. Often families of first generation students do not understand the benefits of attending higher education. “Specifically, there is a distinct element of cultural mobility associated with postsecondary enrollment, particularly if no other family member has had any postsecondary education (Nunez and Cuccaro-Alamin 1998).” Having supportive admissions representatives will help the students through the admissions process without the help of the family. The admissions representatives can be big assets to the institutions while attracting first generation African-American students.

It is beneficial for university marketers to get their message heard by students. Asking the students which sales and marketing approaches they remember hearing helps to understand which messages where received by the students. Nine of the twelve students made their decisions based on a one on one meeting, also known as a direct sales approach. This was done through college fairs and also through high school assemblies.

Five of the students can recall receiving a direct mailer packet from HACC, a local community college. Typically community colleges have been more successful at marketing and recruiting first-generation students. In interviews with 107 minority students who had achieved baccalaureate degrees, Richardson and Skinner (1992) found that first-generation students who attended community colleges typically attended part-time and were more likely than their classmates to have significant work and family responsibilities. Although, none of these students chose to attend the local community college the marketing approach was remembered.

Three students remember hearing advertisements for the University of Phoenix Online School. The students could not pinpoint which type of advertisement the University utilized they just mentioned that they had heard a lot from the Institution around the time they were graduating high school. All three students said online advertisements, but none of them mentioned the local campus. This is important for other local marketers to understand, that the repetition of their marketing approaches are reaching the students.
Two students remember commercials advertising Penn State University. Penn State has two branch campuses in the Harrisburg area. Commercials are one way to target a specific group of students.

One student received a packet in the mail from Cheyney University. As a marketer it is important to send information directly to a specific targeted group. For first generation African American students, having enough information is important as they are the first in their family.

One student remembers a commercial for Penn Tech and one remembers a commercial for online schools in general. The student could not remember which online school the commercial was for.

The students seem to remember direct sales approaches, direct mailers and commercials most from the marketing efforts of the Universities. Understanding which approaches the students remember is important for the marketers.

The final question asked how the specific sales and marketing approaches influenced the students in any way. This is both positive and negative reactions. Nine out of the twelve students decided to go with the school that they talked with at a school college fair. The direct sales approaches seemed to have the most positive reaction from the first-generation African American students.

Five of the students were influenced and interested in the courses catalogues that where sent to their homes. They had positive reactions to the direct mailers that they received. One student had a negative experience while on a campus visit. Touring a campus that did not really seem diverse really had a negative impact on the student. As marketers it is important to cater college visits around what the student is in to. This should include the students major, and any social groups that student plans on being in. This includes minority groups. By excluding that from the school tour the student assumed they did not have any minority groups.

**RECOMMENDATION**

After interviewing twelve, first generation African-American students it is clear that there are certain higher education marketing strategies that are more favorable to this group then others. Nine of the twelve interviewees had a positive response and chose their school based on a direct sales meeting. Being the first in the family can be difficult and having a face to face meeting may help the students to feel more at ease with the school. In addition, the students are able to get all of their questions answered. This can be a big benefit to marketers trying to target this market.

Another importance for higher education marketers would be how many of the students interviewed where looking to stay within two hours of their home town. This gives the marketers trying to attract these students better perimeters of where to target. This can cut down on a lot of wasted marketing expenditures by only targeting within a two to four-hour radius of the school.

Realizing how key the admission representative was to many of these students should encourage many higher education institutions to hire enthusiastic, knowledgeable and personable individuals to fill these positions. This was the person that helped many of the students to overcome barriers so these individuals are key in attracting first generation African American students.

Finally, feeling ill prepared for higher education was a struggle for many of the interviewees. It is important for institutions of higher education to have programs that help apprehensive students to feel they are ready, and also to get them into the correct courses to make them ready. Having a summer head start may be the answer to making sure these students are college ready.

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BANDING STRATEGIES, APPEARANCE BIASES, AND EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION

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SUMMARY

“Get me somebody hot,” demanded Jack Wiswall, General Manager of the Designer Fragrance Division of L’Oreal as he toured the Ralph Lauren Polo section of Macy’s department store in San Jose, California. He directed the order to Elysa Yanowitz, the Regional Sales Manager in charge of that territory, telling Yanowitz that she should terminate a company sales associate whom he did not deem sufficiently attractive. After she discovered that the sales associate was one of the top performers in the entire Macy’s West chain, Yanowitz asked for adequate justification. She received none and therefore resisted Wiswall’s repeated insistence during subsequent visits to replace the associate with someone who looked like “a young, attractive blonde girl, very sexy” that he pointed out to Yanowitz. “God damn it, get me one that looks like that.”

How people look affects their earnings by as much as 10 to 15 percent – good-looking people earn more than average-looking people, who in turn make more than plain-looking people. Social power, self-esteem and the receipt of positive responses from others flow from physical attractiveness, and people are more likely to cooperate with others whom they find attractive. Physical attractiveness correlates with upward economic mobility for women. Employers consider attractive workers more competent and productive. Many employers therefore consciously recruit and select good-looking people in general and those with the “right look” in particular with the expectation that their employees serve as “walking billboards” for the brand.

The law is a blunt instrument when it comes to dealing with employment discrimination issues, including those that involve employee appearance. In large part this reflects the fact that legal and regulatory “rules” often take the form of general standards, e.g., “bona fide occupational qualification reasonably related to the essence of the business” for a gender, religious or ethnicity job requirement; or, an employer’s duty to provide a “reasonable accommodation of an employee’s disability or religious practice, unless it would result in an undue hardship for the employer” where appearance standards conflict with disabilities or religious practices. These standards are highly sensitive to the facts and circumstances of specific situations. As such, they differ from hard-and-fast rules with precisely defined terms that leave little if any room for interpretation. And it is impossible to apply such standards without relying heavily upon underlying social norms and ethical assumptions, often not explicitly acknowledged.

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WEIGHING THE GOOD AND BAD: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EFFECT OF ATTITUINAL AMBIVALENCE ON CHANGING HEALTH BEHAVIORS

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SUMMARY

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC 2011), approximately 33.8 percent of U.S. adults and approximately 17 percent (i.e., 12.5 million) of children are obese (body mass index BMI > 25). At the same time, the revenue generated by weight loss programs has increased to approximately $2 billion in 2010 (First Research Industry Profile 2011). Weight loss interventions typically involve participants changing their eating and exercising behaviors (i.e., eating an appropriate diet and increasing physical activity). Many strategies that consumers try in their behavior change attempts prove to be successful if maintained over the long term. However, many consumers are unhappy with their small weight improvements or experience frustration with weight regain after stopping a weight loss program and, therefore, abandon their diet and exercise regimen (Obesity 2007). Similarly, many consumers indicate that they like the idea of losing weight, but have negative feelings about following a weight loss program. These findings suggest that changing health behaviors such as eating and exercising are more complicated than changing consumers’ purchasing behaviors (Seiders and Petty 2004).

Given the complexity of changing health behaviors, various approaches have been proposed which can be categorized as psychosocial approaches (focused on changing individual behavior through motivation, education, skill training and social support) and environmental and social policies approaches (aimed at modifying the environmental forces that promote weight gain; e.g., nutrition labeling, claims and disclosures in advertisements, banning unhealthy snacks in schools) (Hills, Peters, and Wyatt 2007; Moorman 1990, 1996). In line with the first type of approaches, this research examines the influence of several individual-level factors on consumers’ attitudes and intentions toward changing eating and exercising behaviors.

Despite the wide variety of research that has been conducted on changing health attitudes, intentions and behaviors, there are still several phenomena that are left unexplained and under-researched. We posit throughout this research that when individuals are contemplating and engaging in behavior change related to their weight (through both eating and exercise changes) there is a negative relationship between attitudes and intentions. This hypothesis is unexpected and provides a unique contribution to the consumer research field because it runs counter to much of the prior attitude research (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). The objectives of this research are to show that this negative effect exists, to investigate why it occurs, and to uncover factors that can mitigate this negative relationship. This research demonstrates that the negative relationship between attitudes and intentions to change a health behavior can be explained by the attitudinal conflict between the positive and negative components of an individual’s attitude and the ambivalence that this attitudinal conflict creates. In addition, we show that this negative effect of attitudes on intentions can be mitigated by the individual’s level of self-efficacy and the provision of outcome feedback.

Study 1

Study 1 is designed to capture the conflicting effects of the positive and negative components of the individual’s attitude toward self in a real-world sample of people trying to lose weight by changing their eating and exercise behaviors. A field survey of people was conducted with participants who were recruited from a national online database and screened based on whether or not they had a weight loss goal and were either working with a doctor, nutritionist, trainer, or weight loss program to lose weight. A total of 305 participants completed the survey and met the screening guidelines (i.e., individuals participating in some form of weight loss program).

In order to show the conflicting effects of the positive and negative components of one’s attitude toward the self on the relationship between attitudes and intentions to change a health behavior, we conducted two analyses. First, we regressed the individual’s attitudes toward behavior...
change, the individual’s positive attitude toward self score, and the individual’s negative attitude toward self score on the individual’s intentions to change their eating behaviors. The results show that all three factors had significant effects on the individual’s intentions to change behavior. The second analysis was conducted using the self-evaluative ambivalence (SEA) scores computed from the difference between the positive and negative component scores for the individual’s attitude toward the self. When the individual’s attitude toward behavior change and the SEA scores are regressed on the individual’s intentions to change, the results show significant effects of both factors on the individual’s intentions. In the case of the individual’s attitudes toward behavior change, we find a significant negative effect on intentions ($\beta = -0.476$, $p < .001$). In addition, we find a significant positive effect of SEA on intentions ($\beta = 0.233$, $p < .001$). As a result of this conflict between positive and negative self-evaluations, individuals experience ambivalence about their decision and demonstrate a negative attitude about changing their behaviors even though they express positive intentions toward losing weight and changing their eating behaviors.

**Study 2**

The purpose of Study 2 is to demonstrate the attitudinal ambivalence posited as an explanation for the results of Study 1. In addition to the impact of ambivalence on the health attitude-intention relationship, self-efficacy has been shown to also play a pivotal role in health-related decision-making processes (Bui, Kemp, and Howlett 2011; Block and Keller 1997). Based on self-efficacy theory (Bandura 1997), the degree of individual self-efficacy influences overall evaluations and motivation levels impacting actual engagement in a particular behavior. Extending the argument of factors interacting and/or explaining the self-efficacy to attitude-intentions relationship, we predict that varying levels of self-efficacy can influence the attitude-intention relationship such that the individual level of self-efficacy will interact with ambivalence to influence attitudinal evaluations of health-related decisions. In addition, recent research shows that individuals use feedback about their pursuit of a goal in order to form intentions to behave in a certain manner (Cheema and Bagchi 2011). In this research, feedback about a prior behavior change attempt is provided in order to examine the effects of this information on an individual’s future intentions to try to lose weight. As a result, we conducted a 2 (Ambivalence: Control vs. Presence of Ambivalence) X 2 (Outcome: Success vs. Failure) X 2 (Self-Efficacy: High vs. Low) between subjects experimental design. The ambivalence and outcome factors were manipulated, while the self-efficacy personality trait variable was created using a median-split. Attitude toward eating healthier and intention to change eating behaviors served as the dependent variables of interest for this study. A total of 283 non-student subjects residing in the United States participated in the Qualtrics online survey study.

The results support our conceptualization that self-efficacy interacts with ambivalence and past outcome to influence an individual’s attitudes toward eating healthier. The three-way interaction showed that ambivalent individuals with low self-efficacy receiving information about a past failure indicated less positive attitudes compared to high self-efficacy individuals receiving information about a past failure. Thus, ambivalence coupled with past failure does not necessarily hamper overall attitudes toward eating healthier, unless it is also accompanied by low levels of self-efficacy. Further, consistent with our expectations, the interaction of self-efficacy and past outcome on intentions to change was significant such that low self-efficacy individuals exposed to successful past outcomes expressed higher intentions to change their eating behavior compared to individuals in the high self-efficacy. Finally, results also show a significant interaction of ambivalence and past outcome suggesting that, compared to individuals experiencing ambivalence, individuals in the control condition indicate higher intentions to change their eating behavior after a successful past outcome. Again, past behavior is more relevant for individuals’ intentions to change their eating behaviors, but only for individuals who are not ambivalent about this behavior.

In summary, this research attempts to provide insight into three important and under-researched areas. First, contrary to the findings in the attitude literature (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975; Bagozzi and Warshaw 1990), we demonstrate a negative relationship between an individual’s attitude toward health behavior change and his/her intentions to change that health behavior. This could be due to the fact that health behavioral change may be more difficult to accomplish because health behaviors are more complicated to change than individuals’ purchasing habits. Second, we explore the reasons for this negative effect of attitudes on intentions and show that attitudinal ambivalence about the self and an individual’s abilities and motivation to change the health behavior is the cause. Lastly, we show that self-efficacy and the provision of outcome feedback can mitigate the negative effect and improve the individuals’ intentions to try to change their health behaviors. References are available upon request.
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**SMALL SIZE, BIG BITE: A REASSESSMENT AND REVERSAL OF THE SERVING SIZE EFFECT**

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**SUMMARY**

Obesity is a big problem! Health guidelines highlight that the food industry is well placed to contribute to a national strategy to reduce obesity through the introduction of new packaging that encourages consumption resistance such as smaller 100 calorie, mini, or bite sized portions. It is believed that the availability of smaller portions provides consumers with the power to resist the temptations of larger packaged snack food items. However, these recent innovations thought to help individuals restrain consumption seem to be having a perverse effect, where people who are restrained in their consumption eat more in total from a series of smaller package sizes than from one larger package size. The introduction of smaller packages potentially disadvantages the very individuals that social marketing efforts are supposed to benefit. We term this effect the dieter’s paradox.

The surprising results of recent studies exploring perverse package size effects is a concern not simply because the statistics for dietary failure and unhealthy eating are steadily rising, but because the introduction of smaller sized ranges into retailing spaces may in fact be facilitating rather than inhibiting obesity trends. We believe that closer examination of the effects of package sizes on consumption volume, especially by individuals who are trying to regulate their consumption, is needed. More specifically, we need to look at the types of interventions that can reverse the dieter’s paradox.

We present a series of studies where we first endeavor to replicate the results of Coehlo do Vale, Pieters, and Zeelenberg (2008) and Scott et al. (2008) and then elaborate by adding conditions by which we attempt to eradicate the dieter’s paradox.

The aim of Study 1 was to replicate the published effect that restrained eaters consume more in total from a series of small packages than one large package. The design for the study was a blend of previous studies by Coehlo do Vale, Pieters, and Zeelenberg (2008) and Scott et al. (2008). While both found the dieter’s paradox, there exists a conflict between the two studies as Coehlo do Vale, Pieters, and Zeelenberg (2008) in their Study 2 manipulated restraint by activating “self-regulatory concerns” while Scott et al. (Studies 2, 3, and 4) measured dietary restraint with a scale and created a median split. Therefore, our Study 1 was a 2 x 2 x 2 between-subjects design. The two manipulated variables were package size (small, large) and self-regulatory concerns (activated, unactivated) and a third measured variable was dietary restraint (high, low) based on a median-split on the Herman and Polivy (1980) dietary restraint scale. In our study we crossed both of the measured and manipulated restraint conditions. The results revealed a significant interaction of package size with manipulated restraint. Comparisons revealed that when self-regulatory concerns were activated, consumption from smaller packages was significantly higher than from larger packages. When regulatory concerns were not activated, participants consumed less from smaller packages than they did from larger. However, the interaction of package size with measured restraint was not significant. We attribute this to the poor reliability of the Herman and Polivy (1980) restraint scale. Probit analysis revealed that among those for whom self-regulatory concerns were activated, the probability of eating any was significantly higher than among those whose self-regulatory concerns were not activated. Notwithstanding the results of Study 1 we sought to better understand the dieter’s paradox by examining conditions where we might eliminate the effect in three follow-on studies.

In Study 2 we introduced a condition of food focus into the study design (food focus, no food focus). In the food focus condition participants were told that they would be asked to evaluate the M&Ms at the end of the study in terms of their taste, texture, and color. In the baseline condition, M&Ms were offered incidentally as a snack to accompany a different task (i.e., no-food-focus). In Study 3 we examined whether the type of snack food offered affected the dieter’s paradox. Here, we introduce a condition where participants were offered raisins, a healthy snack food alternative to M&Ms. In Study 4 we manipulated the total volume of food given to participants.
The implications of our studies are that if snack food (and other) companies are going to introduce reconfigurations of package sizes to supermarket shelves in order to support consumer resistance efforts, it is important that these efforts help those most in need of the assistance. The very existence of the paradoxical effect of greater consumption from smaller packages among restrained eaters is a cause for concern. Our results begin to explore the types of interventions that can reverse the dieter’s paradox. References are available upon request.

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PERSONAL CONSUMPTION NORMS

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SUMMARY

Personal norms have been advanced as a factor influencing consumption (Herman et al. 2003; Herman and Polivy 2005; Herman and Polivy 2007; Herman and Polivy 2008), although a lack of clarity persists concerning what precisely these norms are and how they affect behavior. We define personal norms as individualized rules about what is an appropriate amount to eat that are fixed at a point in time. Thus, they are to be distinguished from social (also referred to as “situational”) norms, which are often inferred from behavior and lack specificity. For example, “don’t eat more than your companion” is an inferred social norm supported by empirical evidence (Herman et al. 2003) and, in this case, does set an upper consumption limit; however, it does not suggest a specific amount to consume (Herman and Polivy 2005; Wansink and van Ittersum 2007; Wansink, Payne, and Shimizu 2010). We argue that these personal consumption norms are significantly related to consumption volume. However, they are independent (but not to the exclusion) of external influences, such as portion size or social setting.

To test this supposition, three experiments involving three consumption contexts are presented that illuminate the role of personal norms on consumption volume. These studies were designed to: (1) demonstrate that participants can provide estimates (personal norms) of how much they would typically consume that are independent of industry influences; (2) that actual consumption is positively related to personal norms; and, (3) industry influences (i.e., package size offered, perceived healthiness of food) interact with personal norms. Thus, actual consumption volume is therefore hypothesized to be relative to one’s personal norm rather than created by the situation (Kahn and Wansink 2004; Wansink 2004; Wansink and van Ittersum 2007). The commitment an individual has to adhering to their personal norm influences the volume consumed. We test both intended and actual consumption.

Collectively, the results from the three studies demonstrate that participants can provide estimates (personal norms) of how much they would typically consume that are independent of manipulated industry influences; that actual consumption is significantly related to their personal norms; and that industry influences interact with personal norms or one’s commitment to their norms. These findings also qualify the portion-size effect, that when exposed to large packages the tendency is to eat more (cf., Wansink 1996, 2004). Herein, this tendency was only supported for those not highly committed to their norm.

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ENHANCING OBESITY INTERVENTIONS: UNDERSTANDING SELF-ASSESSED WEIGHT STATUS

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SUMMARY

The prevalence of overweight and obesity in the United States has increased sharply over the last several decades. According to the 2007–2008 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) data, 68.4 percent of Americans, age 20 and over, are overweight or obese, and 34.4 percent of all adults are obese. Due to the resulting health and economic impacts, considerable resources are invested into creating interventions to address this epidemic.

This is a descriptive study using the NHANES data to analyze self-assessments of individuals’ weight status to gauge the accuracy of their own weight perceptions. If misperceptions exist, the second goal is to see if such misperceptions are more prevalent among certain demographic segments. If so, communications objectives could be adjusted to, first, inform these individuals that they may, indeed, be at risk. The intervention would then have a better chance of success if the target recognizes the need to heed such advice.

Theoretical Background

In an era when people are bombarded with marketing communications, individuals learn to be more selective about what messages they actually attend to, or risk being overwhelmed. One obvious tactic is to attend to only those that are personally relevant. In the case of obesity interventions, this means that the individual must recognize that he or she is overweight, or even obese, and that these messages are relevant due to membership in the at-risk group.

Self-identification as an “at-risk” population can be found in several social marketing and communications theories. For example, the Health Belief Model (Rosenstock, Strecher, and Becker 1988) recognizes perceived susceptibility and seriousness of a condition as a determinant of health behavior, thus implicitly recognizing the role of self-identification in the form of perceived self-relevance. Similarly, Protection Motivation Theory (Rogers 1975) includes perceived severity and perceived vulnerability as constructs.

Data

This investigation is based on 2007-08 NHANES data. The set contains information from 10,149 individuals of all ages, selected to represent the U.S. population, and were collected between January 2007 and December 2008 (CDC 2009). For each respondent, the data set includes demographic and socioeconomic information, the actual Body Mass Index (BMI), and a self-perception of his or her weight. For purposes of this study, individuals for whom no BMI data are available, those under age 20, and women who were pregnant are deleted, leaving a sample of 5,143 individuals. Using the sampling weights which are provided to reflect the complex probability sample design used to obtain the NHANES data, analysis can be used to produce unbiased national estimates.

Results

The results show that 74.5 percent of adults have a correct perception of their actual weight status, and about 70 percent of this group knows they are overweight or obese. Only 5.9 percent over assess their actual weight status, incorrectly perceiving they are about right when they are underweight or overweight when they are actually at a healthy weight. Finally, 16.5 percent under assess their own weight, incorrectly perceiving that they are underweight or healthy weight, when they are actually overweight or obese.1 This represents 24 percent of the overweight and obese group.

Kuchler and Variyam (2002) recognized that there are various ways to be incorrect about an individual’s self-assessed weight status. For those who incorrectly assess their weight status, they will be labeled Disbelievers if they under assess their weight and Worriers if they over assess their weight. For purposes of this study, we are most concerned with the Disbelievers who do not realize they are at-risk for obesity.

Nineteen point six percent of adults are Disbelievers. Further, there is a higher percentage of Disbelievers among males than among females and among younger age groups rather than older, until after age 60. Across racial / ethnic groups, there are higher percentages of Disbe-
lievers among Non-Hispanic Blacks and Mexican Americans and Other Hispanics, and lower percentages among Non-Hispanic Whites and Other and Multi-racial. The most troubling results are that almost 38% of overweight individuals are Disbelievers and slightly more than 10 percent of obese individuals are Disbelievers. This confirms the conclusion that many of those who are at-risk don’t see themselves as being in this category.

Discussion

All advertisers realize that if the receiver of the marketing communications does not perceive the message as relevant, it is unlikely he or she will attend to the effort, making the motivation to act improbable. This study shows that there is a very large group of adults who are in need of heeding advice based on their weight status, yet they may not recognize that these messages are targeted to them. Therefore, more education must be included, particularly among certain age and racial segments, before effective obesity intervention communications can be developed.

ENDNOTE

1 There is another 3.1% who under assess their weight, perceiving they are underweight when they are, in fact, healthy weight. Although this is another important weight perception problem, for purposes of this study they are not the target for obesity intervention communications. References are available upon request.

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THE EFFECTS OF HEALTH CONSCIOUSNESS AND FAMILIARITY WITH DTCA ON PERCEPTIONS OF NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTS

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SUMMARY

In today’s environment, consumers are bombarded with conflicting health messages, including a plethora of advertisements for prescription drugs and nutritional supplements that are purported to improve consumer health in numerous ways. Nutritional supplements also receive considerable attention from the media (France and Bone 2005), and some of these supplements contain the same active ingredients as prescription drugs (Mason 1998). The purpose of this study is to assess the relationships between consumer health-consciousness, familiarity with direct-to-consumer advertising (DTCA) and nutritional supplement advertising, attitudes toward nutritional supplements, and consumer perceptions of relative risk and effectiveness of supplements as compared to the prescription drug counterparts.

The FDA standards require a balance in risk and persuasive information in DTCA that do not apply to nutritional supplement advertising. Moreover, consumers’ perceptions of prescription drugs and nutritional supplements are quite different. Bolton et al. (2008) found that drugs were associated with a reduced focus on healthy lifestyle practices, while supplements were found to remind consumers of the need for complementary health protective behaviors as part of a healthy lifestyle. Mason and Scammon (2011) found that many consumers assume a basic level of protection and regulation that does not exist in the supplement industry.

Hypotheses

Health consciousness assesses consumers’ readiness to undertake health actions (Becker et al. 1977). Gould (1988) noted that more health conscious individuals are more prevention oriented as compared to those who are less health conscious. Thus, we expect that:

H1: Health consciousness is positively related to consumers’ attitudes toward nutritional supplements.

France and Bone (2005) applied confirmatory bias theory to nutritional supplements: if consumers perceive supplements overall in a positive manner, then to maintain consistent beliefs, consumers will also have positive perceptions about supplements. Therefore, we posit that:

H2: Consumer attitudes toward supplements are positively associated with stronger perceptions of the relative effectiveness of taking nutritional supplements as compared to the prescription medication counterpart.

H3: Consumer attitudes toward supplements are negatively associated with stronger perceptions of the relative risks of taking nutritional supplements as compared to the prescription medication counterpart.

It has been shown that greater familiarity with DTCA affects consumer perceptions toward DTCA and using a prescription drug (Royne and Myers 2008; Myers, Royne, and Deitz 2011). Thus, we propose that:

H4: The relationship between health consciousness and attitudes toward nutritional supplements will be weaker for consumers with greater awareness of DTCA.

France and Bone (2005) found that supplements receive substantial attention from the media, increasing consumers’ positive attitudes toward them. The Persuasion Knowledge Model suggests that consumers develop knowledge about persuasion and use it to cope with persuasion episodes and achieve his or her own goals (Friestad and Wright 1994). Therefore, we expect that:

H5: The relationship between health consciousness and attitudes toward nutritional supplements will be stron-
Method and Results

Data were collected over a two-week period from customers of a local retailer of nutritional supplement products. A total of 136 usable surveys were obtained. To assess the psychometric properties of our measures, a CFA was conducted.

Health consciousness was positively associated with the favorability of respondent attitudes toward nutritional supplement products, providing support for H1. The favorability of respondent attitudes toward nutritional supplement products was positively associated with perceptions of the relative effectiveness of supplements, and negatively associated with perceptions of relative risk, providing support for H2 and H3. For consumers with greater awareness of DTCA, there was a negative relationship between health consciousness and attitudes toward nutritional supplements, which supports H4. Consumer familiarity with nutritional supplement advertising did not strengthen the link between health consciousness and attitudes toward nutritional supplements. Thus, H5 was not supported.

Discussion and Implications

Our findings indicate that health consciousness is positively related to attitudes toward nutritional supplements, which, in turn, is positively related to perceived supplement effectiveness, but negatively associated with perceived supplement risk. This demonstrates the influence of one’s individual health perceptions on their beliefs about supplement effectiveness and risk. We also found that familiarity with DTCA diminished the strength of the relationship between health consciousness and consumer attitudes toward supplements, which suggests that DTCA may have an effect on consumer perceptions and use of nutritional supplements.

Supplement marketers would do well to focus on consumers who are highly health conscious, use strategies to increase levels of health consciousness, and consider advertising appeals that are more preventive than more promotional in nature. Information about the risks that supplements carry should be provided so consumers can make informed choices about their preventive healthcare. As more supplements and drugs continue to enter the market, it is research should continue to examine perceptions of supplements to ensure that consumers have the information needed to make the healthiest choices possible. References are available upon request.

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CONSUMER CONFUSION: A LOSE/LOSE SITUATION

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SUMMARY

Consumers are confused about a plethora of environmental and health issues. It is likely that the information-rich environment we live in today with competing, complex and conflicting scientific information provided by firms, science-based organizations, government entities, and advocates can lead to consumer confusion in the marketplace. The experiment described below examines consumer confusion that arises from this multi-layered information environment and how, in response to confusion, consumers adjust their attitudes regarding products and firms. We use qualified health claims as applied to foods and dietary supplements as our domain for this investigation because there are ample legal conflicting claims, because food science is ever-changing, because the information on the same package label may contradict itself. As an extreme example, consider green tea. Manufacturers can legally make the statement, “Drinking green tea may reduce the risk of breast or prostate cancer.” However, the approved qualifier then states, “FDA does not agree that green tea may reduce the risk because there is very little scientific evidence for the claim,” (U.S. Food and Drug Administration 2011). Thus, the scientific certainty qualifier can be viewed as in direct conflict with the claim. For these reasons, qualified health claims were chosen as the context for our study.

Background

Consumer confusion is a focus of several lines of consumer research, yet is remarkably understudied as a construct (e.g., Miaoulis and D’Amato 1978; Mitchell and Papavassiliou 1999; Matzler, Stieger, and Fuller 2011). The current research examines two aspects of confusion: cognitive and emotional confusion (Mitchell and Papavassiliou 1999). With cognitive confusion, the consumer is aware that she/he lacks clarity in his/her thoughts. Emotional confusion encompasses the emotional reaction to the confusing situation. Neither type of confusion is expected to work in the consumer’s or the marketer’s favor.

The information environment for foods and dietary supplements seems to be ripe for consumer confusion. Food science is ever-changing and some scientific information directly conflicts with findings of other studies, and indeed, in the case of qualified health claims, the information on the same package label may contradict itself. As an extreme example, consider green tea. Manufacturers can legally make the statement, “Drinking green tea may reduce the risk of breast or prostate cancer.” However, the approved qualifier then states, “FDA does not agree that green tea may reduce the risk because there is very little scientific evidence for the claim,” (U.S. Food and Drug Administration 2011). Thus, the scientific certainty qualifier can be viewed as in direct conflict with the claim. For these reasons, qualified health claims were chosen as the context for our study.

Experiment

A nation-wide sample resulting in 415 individual usable responses was recruited from an on-line panel. The study used a 3 (qualifier: strong scientific support for the claim, moderate and promising scientific support for the claim, or weak scientific support for the claim) by 2 (external source: supporting or not supporting health claim) by 2 (product category: food or supplement). Dependent measures included perceived usefulness of the claim and qualifier, scientific certainty, firm credibility, perceived product quality and behavioral intentions. Cognitive and emotional confusion was explored as covariates and possible mediators of effects.

Results and Discussion

Mediation analysis was used to test whether emotional and/or cognitive confusion mediate the effects of our treatments on the dependent variables (Hayes and Preacher 2011). We find that confusion arises from many environmental factors: the content of the information, product familiarity, and conflict between pieces of information. Both cognitive and emotional confusion are significant determinants of consumer perceptions; yet, it is emotional confusion that mediates the relationship between the information environment and consumer outcomes. Finally, we provide evidence that the relevant outcomes for First Amendment and policy-based marketplace information are much broader than originally framed. Specifi-
cally, in addition to the focal point of the communication, scientific certainty perceptions, we provide evidence that perceived claim usefulness and consumer search, along with perceptions of firm credibility and product quality are directly influenced by qualified health claims and by confusion arising from those claims.

Our results make it clear that both cognitive and emotional confusion should be measured and modeled when examining consumer interpretation of marketplace information. Indeed, as covariates these two variables account for nearly 20 percent of the variance in the dependent variables. Moreover, we find that the emotive component of confusion mediates the effects of marketer-provided information, and that the effects of cognitive confusion are most often direct (i.e., not mediating).

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HOW DO YOUNG ADULT SMOKERS INTERPRET ON-PACK TOBACCO WARNINGS FEATURING DENORMALIZATION THEMES?

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SUMMARY

Smoking causes millions of preventable deaths each year, leading governments to invest in interventions that deter smoking initiation and prompt cessation. However, residual tobacco marketing continues via packaging as this features aspirational brand imagery that undermines policies restricting tobacco marketing. Marketing theorists recognized that consumers purchase products for symbolic meanings as well as physical attributes and functionality and tobacco companies have translated these findings into package designs. Pollay has analyzed how tobacco brand logos, colors, and fonts create imagery that holds particular meaning for specific smoker groups and enables them both to access and communicate that. His work has stimulated research examining how smokers use branding to assert their social identity and individuality.

On-pack warnings disrupt this powerful imagery by presenting alternative messages that challenge the connotations traditionally created, most commonly by focusing on the physical harms smoking causes. Yet, although pictorial health warnings (PHWs) have reduced tobacco packaging’s appeal and made smoking’s harms more apparent, most focus on the physical harms smoking causes, messages that have less effect on young people, who reportedly see them as lacking relevance and realism, and who use self-exempting strategies to diminish the risks.

We identified three key themes in participants’ responses to the new images, which presented more salient health views, we explored how young adult smokers interpret and respond to current warning messages and novel messages that represent denormalization themes.

Nearly all participants recalled specific on-pack health warnings, though their reactions to these varied. Some disliked specific warnings while others claimed they were not affected by these and challenged their realism. These participants felt pictures would not be sufficiently powerful to promote cessation, or claimed they already knew the risks of smoking. For some, these comments revealed an underlying belief that smokers controlled their smoking and would quit when they chose to, rather than when affected by a particular message. Even those claiming to be unaffected self-exempting strategies to minimize the perceived risk they faced. Some described implicit “risk threshold” that they fell below; others practiced “healthy” compensatory behaviors; some saw the risks of smoking as applying only to older, long-term smokers, and others challenged the veracity of the images, or their link to smoking.

We undertook 17 in-depth interviews with young adult smokers (eight female and nine male) aged 18 to 30 who were recruited purposively (via local advertising, direct approaches made to people in the age range observed smoking, and social media). The interview protocol comprised loosely structured questions that explored participants’ smoking history, awareness and perceptions of current warning labels, and views on eight novel warnings. Interviews ranged from 25 to 50 minutes and, with participants’ permission, were recorded, transcribed, reviewed and analyzed for themes.

This evidence suggests policy makers may need to consider refreshing and introducing new types of messages in order to target sub-groups within the wider smoker population. Evidence from the literature suggests denormalizing strategies that challenge perceptions of tobacco as a “normal” product and smoking an accepted practice, may counter aspirational images young people associate with smoking. Depicting smoking not as normal, but toxic; not as cool, but stupid; not as rebellious, but unthinking and weak-willed, and not as attractive, but repellant (due to the smell), may have higher relevance for young people and elicit stronger responses. Using data from in-depth interviews, we explored how young adult smokers interpret and respond to current warning messages and novel messages that represent denormalization themes.

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that defines membership of social groups, it is also a socially alienating behavior. Three images reflected this paradox and presented smoking as an unsocial behavior defined by its strong and aversive smell. Smoking’s unavoidable smell, and others’ reaction against this, led some participants to regard smoking as a socially rejected behavior that lost its aspirational attributes. The final theme reflected depictions of tobacco as a lethal toxin causing self-harm. Participants understood the poison and self-harm messages easily; many felt unsettled by these and found they reduced the experience of smoking. However, messages reframing tobacco as a poison and smoking as akin to self-harm stimulated greater counter-argument and rationalization, a factor that could reduce their effectiveness.

The results of this study increase our knowledge of how individuals interpret, understand, rationalize, and incorporate aversive stimuli into their lives. Since thousands of young people experiment with smoking each year, many of whom go on to become addicted smokers, understanding their responses to denormalization messages may have important implications for tobacco control policy. Our findings reinforce earlier studies that suggested young people regard informational health warnings as lacking salience and relevance. While participants rationalized existing warnings’ perceived irrelevance in several ways, their reactions to the test warnings reflected international evidence that denormalization themes elicit shock and disgust, spoil smoking’s constructed identity of glamour or rebellion, and undermine its symbolic attributes.

Although smoking prevalence is higher among young adults than among other age groups, many of the smoke-free messages used have little relevance to, or impact on, this group. Of the messages we tested, those featuring denormalizing smoking as an acceptable social behavior by drawing attention to the smell and taste of smoking had the highest relevance, salience and immediacy and most effectively challenged the social identity young adult smokers hope to derive from smoking.

Since tobacco packaging represents a key medium for communicating with smokers and could be used more effectively. Future research could refine social messages and images, and compare their effects relative to more traditional health messages. Tailoring themes currently used to the mores of young adult smokers could enhance their relevance, complement existing health messages, and challenge the social benefits young smokers still associate with smoking. References are available upon request.

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"THE TIMES ARE CHANGING": NEW ZEALAND SMOKERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THE TOBACCO ENDBGAME

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SUMMARY

Internationally, smoking prevalence is higher among disadvantaged groups, whose members suffer a greater health burden and bear more of the economic and social costs of smoking than more affluent groups. Within New Zealand, these inequalities are profound; smoking prevalence among Maori (the indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand) is nearly three times the prevalence among non-Maori. Recently, the New Zealand government recognized the harm caused by tobacco, particularly to Maori, by declaring a Smokefree2025 goal. Yet, although achieving this “endgame” vision would eliminate a significant cause of health and social inequality, we know little about how smokers and the wider public regard endgame goals or the interventions needed to achieve these.

Investigating perceptions of the “endgame” is important, since the very concept of an endgame challenges addictive behaviors that harm individual smokers, yet profit tobacco manufacturers. The tobacco industry has framed debate by describing cigarettes as a legal consumer product and smoking a freely chosen behavior, engaged in by those who understand and accept the risk it poses. Attempts to reduce smoking prevalence thus elicit claims of authoritarian interference by an excessively paternalistic “nanny state.” Individuals react against actions that threaten their perceived rights, thus researchers, advocates and policy makers will need to understand the public’s likely reactions to the goal itself and the different interventions that may be required to realize a smoke-free society. We addressed this question by exploring how three priority groups with relatively high smoking prevalence: Maori, Pacific peoples and young adults, interpreted the “endgame” and understood its implications for themselves and other smokers.

We conducted in-depth interviews with 46 people living in six New Zealand geographic regions in August 2011. We recruited participants through flyers placed on three University campuses and community notice boards, via advertising on Facebook and Google Adwords, and through community networks. Participants were either current daily (n = 37) or social smokers (n=5), or had recently quit (n = 4). The semi-structured protocol explored smokers’ perceptions of smoking and being a smoker, and their reactions to the government’s smokefree 2025 goal. Interviews lasted between 40 and 60 minutes, were audio recorded with permission, transcribed verbatim and then reviewed using a thematic analysis approach.

Many participants supported a tobacco “endgame” and saw it as consistent with the smokefree future they wanted for themselves. However, a minority was a little less certain and doubted the viability of the goal, even though they saw it as desirable. They rehearsed the industry’s “freedom of choice” arguments, but recognized and supported the wider good a 2025 tobacco free goal would realize, particularly for Maori and Pacific peoples. They reasoned the goal could provide the impetus smokers needed to quit, thought smokers may even welcome coercion, and considered the goal would appeal to the majority who wanted to quit anyway. Nevertheless, they felt for smokers who may not be ready to quit of their own volition and recognized they may feel threatened by the 2025. Even if they anticipated some personal hardship, the goal resolved the ambivalence they feel about smoking and set out an aspiration with which they empathized.

Most participants saw becoming a tobacco-free country as highly desirable, but debated how this goal might be achieved. For some, removing tobacco from sale would eliminate the anomalous situation where smokers were encouraged to quit while tobacco remained widely available. Suggestions included removing tobacco products from stores, prohibiting smoking, restricting purchase quantities, controlling social supply, and banning tobacco products. Several participants endorsed policies removing tobacco POS displays and mandating smokefree outdoor areas. Several also supported excise tax increases; however, others felt these could lead some smokers to economize on food and put children’s well-being at risk.
Participants suggested facilitating quitting, by providing social support, general community support, particularly from former smokers of their own ethnicity who could empathize with them, and personal incentives. Improved access to cessation services and greater provision of these within local communities would make quitting more salient, provide immediate access to NRT, and could reach them at serendipitous moments, when they might be more likely to quit.

Young adult and Pacific participants strongly supported the endgame goal, despite the potential hardships this outcome might impose on them, though Maori were more ambivalent. Participants identified several supply and demand measures that would catalyze movement towards the 2025 goal and their comments indicated they endorsed measures that policy-makers may lack the confidence to implement. Some participants had a sophisticated understanding of the tensions Government faced in developing the bold regulatory framework necessary to achieve the 2025 goal. They suggested the Government would need to be “radical” in its approach, but at the same time doubted this would happen, given the inevitable decline in revenue from tobacco tax brought about by reduced smoking.

Participants’ willingness to place wider social benefits ahead of their personal convenience reflects the internal conflict many feel about smoking: they need nicotine, yet resent this need; they wish to be smokefree, but do not want their decisions dictated. Underlying these competing attitudes, a majority from all groups supported the smokefree goal and believed this would bring about a “better” society. While some expressed general support for this outcome, describing smoking as “something our country could do without,” others were also cognizant of the social, health and economic disparities caused by smoking and referred to the benefits Maori and Pacific in particular would gain from a smokefree society. Participants’ comments went well beyond current policy and suggest it is timely to review how policy measures could be more closely aligned with smokers’ own suggestions. References are available upon request.

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TOBACCO BRAND PERSONALITIES: PACKAGING AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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SUMMARY

Even before the introduction of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), many countries had begun restricting tobacco marketing, advertising and sponsorship, measures that have become widely adopted in the last five years. At the same time as they have opposed these measures, the tobacco industry has developed alternative brand communications media, among which packaging features prominently. Pollay and Wakefield, among other researchers, have recognized the power of packaging to develop, reinforce and promote desirable brand attributes. Internationally, these findings have gained traction, to the extent that, in 2011, Australia passed legislation requiring all tobacco products to appear in plain packaging.

Predictably, tobacco companies have opposed the Tobacco Plain Packaging Act 201, which they argue violates existing trade agreements or misappropriates intellectual property. Their claims, and the increasing international interest in plain packaging, have refocused attention on packaging and its role as a communications medium. We draw on brand attribute and symbolic consumption theory to explore whether and how packaging communicates brand attributes to young adult smokers and potential smokers.

Marketers rely on branding to associate aspirations, attributes and values with functional products and services. The associations and images physical brand insignia connote have become critical points of differentiation for tobacco products, which rely heavily on emotional and symbolic attributes to attract new users. These attributes enable smokers to use brands to create social identities and mean tobacco manufacturers sell status, social acceptance, glamour and adventure, rather than a device that merely delivers nicotine. Brands thus not only provide access to aspirations, but define group membership, celebrate individuals’ values, and locate these within a wider social network; internal industry documents recognized these roles and reflect a deep understanding of symbolic consumption.

Yet, despite evidence that plain packaging would reduce the attractiveness of smoking and misconceptions about it, few researchers have examined whether tobacco packaging alone communicates brand values. To explore this question, we examined the attributes young adults associate with tobacco brands and the extent to which they differentiated between these on the basis of packaging alone.

To address this question, we undertook a survey of 1035 New Zealanders aged between 18 and 30 from an online consumer panel; quotas were applied to ensure adequate representation by gender, ethnicity (Maori and Pacific Island vs. non-Maori/other) and smoking status (smoker vs. non-smoker). Respondents viewed images of seven cigarette brands: Holiday, Basic, Camel No. 9, Merit, Port Royal, Kool, and Longbeach. Three of these brands – Holiday, Longbeach, and Port Royal – are available in New Zealand and represent brands with high (Holiday) and low (Longbeach) penetration among young adult smokers. Respondents used 15 words that corresponded to brand personality dimensions and associated as many or as few of these with each of the seven brands, depending on their perception of the brand concerned.

To examine patterns in attribute association, we undertook a principal components analysis, which produced between three and five significant factors (Eigen values greater than 1.00) for each brand. Among familiar brands, participants saw Port Royal as primarily traditional and mature, popular and relaxing, and masculine; few regarded it as sophisticated brand, though neither did they consider it budget or plain. Participants regarded Longbeach quite differently and saw this as primarily plain and budget, associations that reflect its lower price point. Participants
associated fewer attributes with Camel No. 9, but thought it a younger brand, likely to be sold at a lower price point, and targeted at women. Kool was also described primarily as a plain or budget brand, but was also considered trendy and cool, and without a specific gender appeal. Of the three unfamiliar brands tested, Merit had strong associations with professionalism and maturity, and was seen as an older and more masculine brand. Overall, respondents interpreted brands’ attributes on the basis of packaging alone; they associated very different attributes with each brand, regardless of whether the brands were familiar or unfamiliar.

Analysis of variance examining the proportion of the sample attributing a construct to a brand revealed some differences between smokers and non-smokers. Although we expected smokers to have higher positive attribute association with familiar brands, they were more likely to see these as budget and less likely to regard them as relaxing than non-smokers. While we expected smokers and non-smokers to respond in similar ways to unfamiliar brands, non-smokers associated more positive attributes with these than smokers. Both smokers and non-smokers saw the pack with largely generic branding – Basic – as only plain and budget.

This study contributes to the debate over plain packaging by examining what, if any, attributes familiar and unfamiliar tobacco brands communicate to young adults, and how smokers and non-smokers interpret these. Young adults distinguished between different tobacco brands on the basis of packaging alone, irrespective of the brands’ familiarity. That neither smokers nor non-smokers saw the Basic brand as anything other than “plain” or “budget” suggests generic packaging would remove the associations communicated by branded products.

While our study builds on exploratory work and uses a diverse sample to examine brand-attribute associations, it has some limitations. First, brand-attribute associations alone do not indicate increased risk propensity; nor do they demonstrate that plain packaging would reduce smoking prevalence. Further experimental work testing the appeal and likely response to packs with varying levels of branding is required to address this question. Notwithstanding this caveat, the findings extend our understanding of how young adults interpret tobacco branding and suggest plainly packaged tobacco products would be widely seen as “budget” and “plain” by groups at greater risk of initiation, addiction, and harm. References are available upon request.

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FOOLING SOME OF THE PEOPLE SOME OF THE TIME?
UNDERSTANDING FORMAT EFFECTS AND NUMERACY
FOR FRONT-OF-PACKAGE NUTRITION CLAIMS

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SUMMARY

Given concerns related to the obesity epidemic and consumption related issues, effects of nutrition labeling and front-of-package (FOP) claims have increasingly become an important topic (Institute of Medicine (IOM) 2011). Given an increasing interest in the presentation of FOP claims (IOM 2011; Andrews et al. 2011), we examine the influence of the format of numeric information embedded in FOP nutrient claims. In addition, because consumers vary widely in their numeracy skills, their ability to process simple numeric and percentage concepts (Peters et al. 2006) could affect their processing of numbers on nutrition claims.

Consumers currently are exposed to FOP labels that vary substantially in formats and can include symbols, colors, text, and numbers, with more formats being proposed (Andrews et al. 2011, IOM 2011). Numeracy can play a key role in consumer evaluations (e.g., Peters et al. 2006). Research indicates that people tend to focus on absolute numbers and do not put as much attention on the unit or scale used for the numbers (Pelham, Sumarta, and Myaskovsky 1994). Consistent with the numerosity literature, we predict that when a less saturated fat FOP claim is represented as a percentage decrease compared to a gram unit decrease, low numeracy consumers will have more positive attitudes and purchase intentions toward the product that has the claim with the larger numerical decrease (i.e., the percent claim). For consumers higher in numeracy, we predict the claim unit format will not influence consumers’ response (H1).

In the first study we test the effect of unit format on a FOP less saturated fat nutrient claim presented on a frozen food meal. The FOP claim either stated 75 percent or 7.5g “less saturated fat” with all other information invariant. The numeracy scale (adapted from Peters et al. 2006) gauged ability to interpret numeric information presented on nutrition labels. Dependent variables include attitude toward the product and purchase intentions. The design is a 2 (reduction claim format: percent vs. absolute (raw) unit) x 2 (nutrient type: sodium vs. saturated fat) x 2 (numeracy level: lower vs. higher) between subjects experiment. A total of 98 participants completed the study (mean age = 37).

The results indicate that consumers who are highly numerate are not strongly influenced by the format of the numbers on the FOP nutrient claim. If consumers are less numerate, then the format used in the claim makes a difference. In this situation, low numerate consumers had more positive evaluations of the claim using a percentage compared to the absolute number format.

Study 2 examines the nature of this effect for another nutrient, sodium, which has a much larger absolute number that is presented on nutrition labels. Given a lack of knowledge and the high absolute values for sodium, we expect that for lower sodium claims, consumers will find both the percentage and the absolute unit formats relatively difficult to interpret. Because of the greater familiarity with saturated fat, we predict that low numeracy consumers will find the absolute values for saturated fat to be more difficult to interpret compared to the percent claim (H2). We also predict that low numerate consumers will interpret the FOP claim reductions differently depending on how the numeric information is presented. Because of the difference in scaling for sodium, we predict that the effect of the claim format differs across these two nutrients. Thus, H3 predicts a three-way interaction between the nutrient, claim format, and numeracy level.

This study employs a 2 (reduction claim format: percentage vs. absolute (raw) unit) x 2 (nutrient type: sodium vs. saturated fat) x 2 (numeracy level: lower vs. higher) between subjects experiment. The set-up is similar to the first study. For the nutrient condition, there was a FOP nutritional claim that stated the meal contained either less saturated fat or less sodium. Dependent variables included favorableness of the nutrient levels and difficulty in interpreting the healthfulness of the product. The sample consisted of 168 participants (age range: 18 to 74, mean age = 36).
We found support for the predicted three-way interactions ($p’ s < .05$). Low numerate participants perceived the product healthfulness as more difficult to determine in the absolute value condition compared to the percent condition ($p < .02$). In contrast, there was no difference in perceived difficulty for low or high numerate participants presented with the less sodium claim or for high numerate consumers presented with the less saturated fat claims. Participants low in numeracy who received the less saturated fat claim perceived the saturated fat level in the product to be more favorable when the claim was presented as a percent decrease compared to an absolute value decrease ($p < .05$). There was no influence of claim format for highly numerate participants.

The implications from these studies indicate a need for more consumer education and consideration of formats to express nutrient levels that are easy for consumers to process and utilize. Consistent with labeling research on low literate consumers (Viswanathan et al. 2009), the results indicate that consumer numeracy levels can influence responses to FOP nutrient content claims. How favorably consumers perceive nutrient claims will depend on the nutrient and the type of format used to present the claim information. This indicates that there is no single format to present FOP nutrition claims that will be optimal for consumer welfare across all nutrients. It appears that policy makers and manufacturers need to take into account the unit that each nutrient is presented in, consumer numeracy and knowledge, and overall personal relevance of the specific nutrient. References are available upon request.

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CONSUMER REACTIONS TO THREE FRONT-OF-PACKAGE NUTRITION SYMBOLS

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SUMMARY

With the increased interest in healthier foods, packaged food manufacturers and retailers around the world recently have been adding to the front of packages (FOP) nutrition symbols about products’ nutritional characteristics. FOP symbols can generally be classified into two categories (IOM 2010). One category is a summary symbol that uses an algorithm to construct an indicator of the overall nutritional profile of a product, such as the Choices icon used by Unilever and the NuVal score brought to market by Topco Associates, LLC and Griffin Hospital and shown on the shelf tags in some grocery stores in the United States (U.S.). The other category is a nutrient-specific symbol that discloses calorie contents and amounts of selected nutrients such as fat and sodium, such as the Multiple Traffic Light symbol developed by United Kingdom’s Food Standards Agency and the Facts Up Front symbol that the Grocery Manufacturers of America and the Food Marketing Institute are rolling out currently (GMA 2011). The two categories of symbol may have different impacts on food perceptions and choices primarily because they present different amounts of information (general vs. nutrient-specific), different cues (directional vs. factual), and may cause different degrees of halo effects.

A commonly stated goal for providing such point-of-purchase nutrition information is to help consumers make informed choices of healthier products, which in turn may help improve the quality of their diet. Whether this goal is achieved depends on many factors, among which are the content, format and presentation of the information as well as consumer response to the information. Specifically, do consumers notice the information? Do they understand the information? How does the information affect product perceptions and purchase intention? How does use of the information influence consumer purchase decisions? Answers to these questions are important for policymakers in their consideration of measures that can help enhance the usefulness and availability of the information and thereby improving public health while minimizing unintended consequences. Answers to these questions are also important for food manufacturers and retailers in their evaluation of the success and worthiness of the provision.

Despite the existence of a body of literature on how consumers in different countries respond to various types of real and conceptual FOP nutrition symbols (for example, Andrews, Burton, and Kees 2011; van Herpen and van Trijp 2011; Malam et al. 2009; Kelly et al. 2009; Bormeier et al. 2009; Feunekes et al. 2008; United Kingdom Food Standards Agency 2005; Young and Swinburn 2002; Scott and Worsley 1994), IOM (2011) recently concluded that there is a paucity of peer-reviewed empirical evidence on FOP symbols’ effects on consumers. More importantly, the literature has two major limitations. First, most of the research, except Andrews, Burton, and Kees (2011), van Herpen and van Trijp (2011), and Feunekes et al. (2008), did not examine and compare the relative impacts of nutrient-specific versus summary FOP symbols. This shortcoming prevents a better understanding of the role that FOP symbols may play in the U.S. market because, unlike many other countries, both nutrient-specific and summary FOP symbols are present in the U.S. market. Second, most of the research was conducted in countries that do not have the same labeling requirements and regulatory framework, e.g., mandatory and standardized Nutrition Facts label, as the U.S. does. Since U.S. and non-U.S. consumers face different labeling environments, it is uncertain whether and how much findings derived from most existing studies are applicable to the U.S. market.

Building on the existing literature, this study was designed to examine and compare U.S. consumers’ perceptions of a selected set of examples of nutrient-specific and summary FOP nutrition symbols that were or had been available in the U.S. or the United Kingdom (U.K.). Results of the study contribute to the understanding of how different FOP symbols may affect U.S. consumers’ purchase intentions and product perceptions.

Methodology and Data

The randomized controlled study uses a 5 (label) x 3 (food category) factorial design. The five labels are a package front showing Nutrition Highlights (NH), a nutrient-specific symbol still used in the U.S., a package front showing “Nutrition Tips” (NT), a nutrient specific symbol that was developed for the study and includes features of the U.K. Multiple Traffic Lights symbol; a package
front showing Smart Choices (SC), a summary symbol that was developed by a coalition of industry and other partners and used in the U.S. market for a short period of time in the fall of 2009; a control label that shows only the Nutrition Facts label (NF) required on most packaged food products in the U.S. market; and another control label that shows only the front of a package, product identity (e.g., Baked Crackers) and image, but not any nutrition symbol (None). Each of the three food categories includes a healthier and a less healthy product: breakfast cereals (healthier-shredded wheat, less healthy-raisin bran), savory snacks (healthier-baked crackers, less healthy-corn chips), and frozen meals (healthier-pepperoni wheat pizza, less healthy-turkey breast dinner). Product healthfulness was determined by a nutritionist.

The respondent universe of the study was adult (18 years of age or older) members of a U.S. online consumer panel. Respondents were recruited using a quota sampling method so that the distributions of respondents match that of the U.S. adult population in age, gender, education, and ethnicity/race. A total of 2424 respondents completed the 14-minute study.

Respondents were randomly assigned to one of two versions of the study to avoid context effects. In Version 1, respondents first viewed the labels of a pair of products in a given category showing the same symbol, stated their purchase intention twice in the same order: “if you were shopping for [a category of foods], which of these two products would you be more likely to buy,” and “if you wanted to buy a healthy product for your family, which of these two products would you select?” They next rated the health benefits (on a 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree” scale) and nutrient contents of the selected product (on a 1 “none or a little” to 5 “a lot” scale). Then they viewed a single product of a different category and with a different label condition, and rated the health benefits and nutrient contents of the product using the same scales. In Version 2, respondents performed the product choice and single product tasks in reverse order. In most tasks and except for the None label, respondents who wished to look at a product’s Nutrition Facts label could do so by clicking on the package front.

Results

One of the dependent measures of the effects of FOP nutrition symbols on purchase intention is the match between the product selected by a respondent and the product designed to be the healthy version between two products in the same product category. Results from both versions of the study were combined and reported here. The proportions of respondents whose said they would be more likely to buy the predetermined healthy products if “they were shopping” are 56 percent, 58 percent, 49 percent, 65 percent, and 47 percent for NH, NT, SC, NF, and None, respectively. The proportions are 42 percent, 55 percent, and 68 percent, for breakfast cereals, frozen meals, and savory snacks, respectively. A generalized linear mixed model shows that there are main effects for both nutrition symbol (p < .0001) and food category (p < .0001). Specifically, the proportion is smaller for None than for NH (p = .005), NT (p = .0028) or NF (p < .0001), and proportion is smaller for SC than for NF (p < .0001). The different proportions with respect to food categories are all significant (p < .0001).

The proportions of respondents who said they would buy the predetermined healthy products “if they wanted to buy a healthy product for their families” are 67 percent, 73 percent, 58 percent, 79 percent, and 50 percent for NH, NT, SC, NF, and None, respectively. Except NF, all proportions were higher when respondents were asked to choose a healthy product than to simply to choose a product, suggesting the health prompt may have made respondents pay more attention to information on the nutrition symbols and the NF. The proportions are 58 percent, 60 percent, and 78 percent, for breakfast cereals, frozen meals, and savory snacks, respectively, suggesting the health prompt affected cereal choices more than the other two product categories. A generalized linear mixed model shows that there are main effects for both nutrition symbols (p < .0001) and food categories (p < .0001). Yet, there is also a significant interaction effect (p < .0493). Specifically, between the two cereal products, respondents who saw the NT were more likely to choose the predetermined healthy product than respondents who saw the SC (p = .0004). All other differences are between a symbol and the NF control or the None control at the p < .01 level, but not between any of the three symbols. Note that the response to the first purchase intent question (“if you were shopping”) is the most significant covariate in this analysis, a finding that was to be expected given that all respondents were asked “if you were shopping” before “if you were shopping for a healthy product for your family.” These results suggest that, at least within the set of sample FOP symbols examined in this study, there is no winner as to which symbol would help consumers most. Furthermore, the results raise the question of whether a single symbol can be effective across a variety of product categories.

As for perceptions of a product’s health benefits and nutrient contents, the reported results were obtained from Version 2, which asked participants to first rate a single product and then select a healthy product and rate the selected product. The average rating of seven items relat-
ed to health benefits ($\alpha = 0.89$) suggests that, there are no main label effects for healthy products. For less healthy products, there is neither a main effect between NT and NH (by design, less healthy products did not qualify for SC). No main or interaction effects were found in nutrient content ratings. A possible reason is that many respondents referred to the NF before giving their ratings and the NF provided factual information about a product’s nutritional profile and thus dampened potential differences in respondent perceptions.

**Conclusions**

This study reports how a sample of FOP nutrition symbols and other labeling may affect the purchase intention and product perceptions of respondents selected from a U.S. online consumer panel. The study examined two nutrient-specific symbols, a summary symbol, a control that showed only the mandatory Nutrition Facts label, and a control that showed only a package front without any symbol or the Nutrition Facts label. Results suggest the presence of a nutrition-specific symbol, but not a summary symbol, can be helpful if and when consumers want to choose healthier products. There is, however, no conclusive evidence to say which nutrient-specific symbol would be most helpful. Furthermore, different nutrient-specific symbols may convey similar product images to consumers. These results can enhance our understanding of the role that nutrition symbols may play in the U.S. market and enrich dialogues among stakeholders about future directions of nutrition symbols.

**REFERENCES**


CAN YOU JUDGE A FOOD BY ITS COVER?

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SUMMARY

Grocery shoppers face an array of front-of-pack (FOP) nutrition and health claims when making food selections. These promotion strategies range from breakfast cereals that “may reduce the risk of heart disease” to prepared meals that are “low-fat” and “cholesterol free.” The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) defines four types of FOP nutrition claims; including; nutrient content claims, health claims, qualified health claims, and structure/function claims. These claims are often used by consumers to make judgments about nutritional quality yet may be indistinguishable.

Nutrient content claims are statements signifying the level of a nutrient in a food, such as “sodium free,” “high fiber,” or “reduced fat.” Nutrient content claims include descriptive terms, such as “healthy,” “lean,” or “light,” which describe the levels of multiple nutrients in a food. Similar to nutrient content claims food manufacturers can also make statements of amount, which disclose the level of a nutrient or ingredient, e.g., “100 calories” or “16g of whole grain.”

Health claims are statements which, either implicitly or explicitly, suggest a relationship exists between the presence or level of a substance in the food and a disease or health condition. Health claims are statements that meet a standard of significant scientific agreement but still require a disclosure statement describing the conditions which must be met to obtain the health benefit. Examples, of implied health claims include heart symbols or phrases such as “heart healthy.” Qualified health claims also characterize the relationship between a substance and a disease or health condition, but do not have enough scientific evidence to meet the standard significant scientific agreement. Therefore, these claims must carry a qualifying statement conveying the level of scientific evidence currently available to support the claim.

Structure/function claims are statements which describe the relationship between a substance and normal body function, such as “calcium builds strong bones” or “fiber maintains bowel regularity.” Unlike health claims, these claims cannot mention a disease or health-related condition; i.e., a statement such as “calcium may reduce risk of osteoporosis” would be classified as a health claim rather than a structure/function claim. Additionally, unlike health claims, structure/function claims do not require pre-approval by the FDA. Therefore, it is not uncommon for food manufacturers to be somewhat liberal in their interpretation of structure/function claims, making statements such as “promotes vitality of five body systems” or “supports healthy arteries.” Since these claims are technically outside the scope of FDA-defined structure/function claims, these claims will be referred to as implied structure/function claims for the purposes of this paper. Finally, in addition to these nutrition claims, manufacturers commonly make ingredient claims, such as “made with whole grains,” that may influence consumers’ perceptions about the nutritional quality of a food.

The applied marketing literature, and recent explorations of the policy implications in the USA emphasize the benefits of FOP nutrition claims, which ideally serve to differentiate healthier foods from less healthy ones and increase nutrition awareness among consumers. Although the Nutrition Facts Panel has been mandatory on most food labels since 1995, many consumers use this resource only sporadically, and find the volume and format of information difficult to use in making evaluative decisions regarding nutritional. Additionally, the Nutrition Facts Panel is rarely located on the front of a food package, so consumers need to be motivated to search, find and compare nutrition information. FOP nutrition claims may serve as a solution to this dilemma by making information simpler and more salient. From this perspective, the presence and frequency of FOP nutrition claims on a food product should be indications of higher nutrition quality.

To date no empirical study evaluates the association between FOP nutrition claims and nutrition quality. Using data reporting key aspects of food innovations, more than 2,200 breakfast cereal and prepared meal products launched in the USA between 2006 and 2010 were analyzed. The probability of a product meeting the FDA standard for a “healthy” claim was modeled using a probit regression. A series of multinomial logit regressions were also applied to nutrient levels of products.
In general, the results suggest that FOP nutrition claims are not good indicators of whether a food is “healthy,” but in some cases they can be used to differentiate between levels of an individual nutrient. The gap between foods that qualified to make a “healthy” claim, and those which actually made the claim was somewhat surprising. Previous research has shown that consumers often associate “healthy” with inferior taste or sensory quality. This may be one reason manufacturers are wary of using the term. Another possibility is that manufacturers may have chosen to use more specific nutrient-content claims, such as “low sodium” or “high fiber,” which may serve as a better point of differentiation from other products in the category.

This study exposed the limitations of using the FDA standard of “healthy” as a general indication of nutritional quality. Perhaps using a different definition which includes additional nutrients, such as sugar, or has category-appropriate nutrient thresholds would yield improved results. While the models presented in this paper illustrated which variables were significant predictors of nutrient levels, additional research is needed to better understand why these relationships were significant. It should be noted that this study only analyzed explicitly stated claims or implied claims that have been defined by the FDA (e.g., a heart symbol is an implied health claim). The size or locations of FOP nutrition claims, as well as more ambiguous visuals that may make implications about nutritional quality, were beyond the scope of this study. A spatial analysis of a complete array of explicit and implied FOP nutrition claims would be a logical next step and valuable addition to the literature.

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AVATAR APPEARANCE AS A MODIFYING FACTOR ON GENEROSITY

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SUMMARY

In virtual worlds, avatars, or digital representations of a person, mediate people’s interaction with other people and with the environment. The visual representation of one’s self constitutes an ever-present nonverbal component of communications with others. In this context, we study whether decisions made about these virtual representations have an impact on the behavior shown toward others in consequential choices. Previous literature has found that certain types of electronic communications do have an impact on people’s willingness to be cruel or kind toward others. However, avatars as a specific device have gone understudied. Our goal is to examine whether the use of a specific digital figure can, in itself, impact pro-social behaviors.

Early work focuses on examining the influence of appearance on people’s judgments of the avatar with whom they interact. This spans such topics as perceived avatar expertise (Holzwarth, Janiszewski, and Neumann 2006) and how users create visual identities in social networks (Hancock, Toma, and Ellison 2007; Vasalou et al. 2008). Both studies find that virtual self-representation tends to be realistic in general, with frequent but slight enhancement of essential characteristics. In the mentioned studies, future face-to-face interaction with others may serve as a check to over-embellishing one’s virtual self-representation. However, in settings where they have no expectations of being compared against their real self, the virtual avatar moved toward an ideal representation (Ducheneaut et al. 2009). In short, avatar appearance has been found to modify behavior online, and people are aware of the broad potential to move away from their real appearance and stand behind an avatar’s mask.

One’s behavior is altered when we no longer must show our own identities to the world. Anonymity allows for anti-normative and anti-social behaviors to arise that would normally be constrained by feeling stronger ties to one’s self (Diener et al. 1976; Festinger, Pepitone, and Newcomb 1952; Singer, Brush, and Lublin 1965). The concepts of anonymity – not being tied to a social identity – and invisibility – not having their faces or behaviors seen – are two of the key factors for disinhibition in online environments, or the removal of typical constraints on one’s behavior (Suler 2004). The modern reality of global communications has allowed their findings to reach the everyday world, and cruel behavior is indeed more present in computer-mediated communications (CMC) relative to face-to-face interactions (Kiesler et al. 1985; Orenga et al. 2000; Siegel et al. 1986; Sproull and Kiesler 1986).

Not all changes in behavior are necessarily bad. Generally speaking, people prefer not to share information about themselves (Cialdini 1993; Kelly and McKillop 1996; Lane and Wegner 1995). However, subjects allowed to remain anonymous engaged in far more self-disclosure compared to those who revealed their identities, which is useful in forming certain social bonds and addressing therapeutic needs (Christopherson 2007; Hinduja 2008; Joinson 2001; Lee, Im, and Taylor 2008). People may not wish to give up the anonymity of CMC as they perceive it to provide a more equal playing field (Haraway 1990; Poster 1990; Sproull and Kiesler 1991). The answer, then, is not to eliminate the use of anonymity online (such as with avatars), but to understand what happens in these situations, so we may seek ways to eliminate the negatives while protecting the positives for these vulnerable groups.

We use an economic game as a method of measuring treatment toward other parties in CMC environments. In dictator games, one participant chooses how to split a payout between both subjects. The recipient can only take what the other party offers. Thus, they measure altruism without any fear of reprisal (Camerer 2003). Even though the dictatorial player is certain of getting any amount they stipulate, norms of fairness and altruism still guide their actions to some degree; on average, players still give away twenty percent of their possible payment (Forsythe et al. 1994). A certain pro-social baseline is found to exist.
As previously noted, appearance is of concern in CMC and has been shown to affect behaviors in real life and in economic game interactions (Smith et al. 2009). As such, it was chosen as a manipulated factor in this early work investigating whether avatar appearance can have an impact on pro- and anti-social behavioral judgments toward others.

In our setting, we administer a dictator game on participants, all of whom take the role of the first player (who chooses how much of their possible payment to give). We ask participants to state the amount of some cash endowment that they would give to a hypothetical second player. Before making a decision on what to offer the other party, the first player is shown avatars that represent him or herself and the other party. Our interest is on whether the relative attractiveness of the two avatars influences the amounts that participants state they are willing to give to the (hypothetical) other party.

We used a 2 x 2 x 2 design, where the first factor is the decision-maker’s avatar, which can be attractive (A) vs. unattractive (U). The second factor is the (hypothetical) other-party’s avatar, which can be attractive vs. unattractive. The third factor is the sex of the decision maker and the other party, which can be male-male vs. female-female. We assigned avatars of the same sex as the participants. We set our total sample size of 240 participants (120 men and 120 women) to provide 30 participants in each cell.

The average amount participants in the A_self, A_other condition gave to the Other Party is $4.53 out of $10. The average for the female subsample is $4.75, which is not statistically distinguishable from the average for the male subsample of $4.32. We see a pronounced and significant impact of virtual representation on outcomes when moving from the A_self, A_other condition to any of the other conditions. Moving from the A_self, A_other condition to the U_self, A_other condition results in participants sharing less with the other party. In a model of this behavior, the associated estimate of $\beta_1$ is -$1.42 (t = -3.35; p = .001). This indicates that people kept almost a-dollar-and-a-half more for themselves when their avatar is unattractive and the other avatar is attractive (compared to them both being attractive). Statistically significant numbers hold for both females (t = -2.56; p = .012) and males (t = -2.22; p = .029).

Moving from the A_self, A_other condition to A_self, U_other also results in less sharing with the other avatar. The estimate of $\beta_1$ is -0.98 (t = -2.33; p = .021). This indicates that people keep almost a dollar more when they are attractive and the other avatar is unattractive (relative to when both are attractive). The results are similar, but less significant, for each gender separately; for males (t = -1.74; p = .084) and females (t = -1.56; p = .122). Now, moving from the A_self, A_other condition to the U_self, U_other condition also leads to lower willingness to share. The estimate of $\beta_3$ is -1.18 (t = -2.78, p = .006). But there is a marked difference between females and males. For female respondents, the estimated coefficient is -1.95 (t = -3.44, p = .001) – almost two dollars less – while, for males, the coefficient is -0.40, which is not even significantly different from zero. Further research about this divergent interaction appears warranted, as we have identified different potential drivers of pro-social behaviors toward others: attractiveness vs. similarity. Overall, we find that when we are at an appearance disadvantage, we are more solicitous of our own monetary needs, but when others are at an appearance disadvantage, we are less willing to give to them. Furthermore, men and women seem to combine these two effects differently. More generally, we verify that virtual appearance does influence behavioral intentions in our experimental setting, even in an early study where users did not choose their own avatar appearance. This suggests that websites with a vested interest in promoting pro-social behavior may be able to do so through something as simple as controlling the avatar through which users represent themselves. References are available upon request.

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ARE ALL ADVERGAMES CREATED EQUAL? CHARACTERISTICS OF FOOD ADVERGAMES THAT REACH CHILDREN AND THE NUTRIENT QUALITY OF THE FOODS THEY ADVERTISE

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SUMMARY

With childhood obesity drawing public attention as a serious public health issue, criticisms toward food marketing abound. In particular, interactive online food marketing tactics such as advergames have been criticized for the promotion of unhealthy food products.

Despite the increased attention to and scrutiny of innovative and interactive food marketing targeting children, little is known about the extent to which such techniques actually reach children and about the content and nutritional quality of foods they promote. The purpose of this study is to fill that gap by focusing on food advergames.

This study uses a triangulated approach to filling in the gap in knowledge by integrating three different sources of data: (1) audience data from the Internet measurement company comScore, (2) an analysis of food advergame content, and (3) analysis of the dietary quality of the foods in advergames. By analyzing and linking the multiple data types and sources, this study is one of the first to associate the specific content of food advergames, including the types and dietary quality of foods promoted in those advergames, with the advergames that are actually reaching children aged 2–11. Our categorization of healthy versus unhealthy food types is based on different standards offered by three authoritative food marketing and childhood obesity stakeholder agencies: the Institute of Medicine (IOM), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI). By comparing and contrasting the nutrition guidelines of these three major agencies, we demonstrate their efficacy in providing consistent and clear nutrition guidelines for the public.

First, we examine the extent to which food advergames that reach children are sponsored by CFBAI participating versus non-participating companies. Descriptive statistics show that 83.2 percent (N = 119) of the total 143 advergames are sponsored by CFBAI participating companies and 79.5 percent (N = 35) out of the total 44 advergames reaching children are sponsored by those companies.

Second, we examine the content of food advergames. Characteristics of food advergames that were examined include the following: presence of age limit, ad breaks, healthy lifestyle information, and the number of brand identifiers. The results show that about 87% of the advergames reaching children did not include age limit specification. By contrast, about 71% of the advergames reaching children included ad breaks and about half of the advergames reaching children included healthy lifestyle information. Compared to the total (M = 2.69, SD = .99), advergames reaching children (M = 2.89, SD = 1.14) seemed to have a higher level of brand integration. But an independent samples t-test between advergames with versus without child unique visitors revealed only marginally significant difference (t(109.41) = 1.83, p = .07).

In addition, frequency of food advergames reaching children that promote healthy versus unhealthy food products was scrutinized based on three guidelines presented by the FDA, IOM and CSPI. According to the FDA guideline, 6.8 percent of the advergames reaching children promoted healthy foods only, while 36.4 percent and 56.8 percent promoted unhealthy foods only and both healthy and unhealthy foods, respectively. According to the IOM guideline, however, no food advergames reaching children included ad breaks and about half of the advergames reaching children included healthy lifestyle information. Compared to the total (M = 2.89, SD = 1.14), advergames reaching children (M = 2.89, SD = 1.14) seemed to have a higher level of brand integration. But an independent samples t-test between advergames with versus without child unique visitors revealed only marginally significant difference (t(109.41) = 1.83, p = .07).

In addition, frequency of food advergames reaching children that promote healthy versus unhealthy food products was scrutinized based on three guidelines presented by the FDA, IOM and CSPI. According to the FDA guideline, 6.8 percent of the advergames reaching children promoted healthy foods only, while 36.4 percent and 56.8 percent promoted unhealthy foods only and both healthy and unhealthy foods, respectively. According to the IOM guideline, however, no food advergames reaching children promoted healthy foods only, while 36.4 percent and 61.4 percent of the food advergames promoted unhealthy food products only and both healthy and unhealthy food products, respectively. Lastly, according to the CSPI guideline, no food advergames reaching children promoted healthy food products only, while 36.4
percent and 63.6 percent of the food advergames promoted unhealthy food products only and both nutrient and calorie dense food products, respectively.

Further, this study identifies factors most likely to predict food advergames reaching children. The results show that ad breaks and number of brand identifiers are the two significant predictors of food advergames with child unique visitors. However, none of the three nutrition guidelines was significantly predictive of food advergames with child unique visitors (as opposed to those with non-child unique visitors).

By identifying the characteristics of the advergames that actually reach children and types of food that they advertise, these findings suggest policymakers carefully scrutinize the content of advergames that children may be more attracted to. We also suggest that consistent and coherent nutrition guidelines be developed across agencies.

ENDNOTE

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CHARACTERISTICS OF ADVERGAMES THAT INFLUENCE CHILDREN’S BRAND ATTITUDES, TASTE BELIEFS, AND PURCHASE REQUESTS

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SUMMARY

Childhood obesity is rapidly increasing throughout the United States (Ogden et al. 2010) and is a risk factor for many childhood and adult diseases such as type 2 diabetes, some cancers (Fuemmeler, Pendzich, and Tercyak 2009), non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (Lavine et al. 2010), asthma, sleep abnormalities, hypertension, urinary incontinence, skin infections, and other psychosocial concerns (Janke, Collins, and Kozak 2007; Maggard et al. 2005). While the problem is well recognized, the causes are far more complex (Briefel 2009). Food marketing to children has been identified as a significant contributor. Food marketers have developed their own guidelines for how they market food to children (Council of Better Business Bureaus 2006), but public concerns continue to grow (Kunkel et al. 2009; Quilliam et al. 2011).

Studies show that food is heavily advertised to children and that these products are often high in sugar, sodium, or fat (Harrison and Marske 2005; Hastings et al. 2003; Higham 2003; Lassus 2003). One specific tool that marketers use to target children is advergames. Advergames are free online games designed to promote a product, integrating food brand identifiers, brand names, pictures of food, and packaging into the games (Lee et al. 2009; Moore and Rideout 2007). More often than not, advergames are promoting non-nutritious foods (83.8%, Lee et al. 2009). Advergames have been shown to influence a child’s brand attitudes and preferences; the more positive a child’s attitude toward a game, the more positive the attitude toward the brand (Waiguny, Terlutter, and Zaglia 2011).

Since little research has examined the specific mechanisms by which advergames can influence the player, we use studies of product placement to develop our concepts and hypothesis. Past research found that higher brand recall when the product placement was in focal proximity to the game and when gamers were given pictures of the product versus words (Chaney, Lin, and Chaney 2004). Another also found that prominent ad placement led to stronger brand recall (Cauberghe and De Pelsmacker 2010). However, both these studies were conducted on participants above the age of 15 so the results may not translate to children.

This study offers an early report of findings of a larger National Institutes of Health sponsored study on the role of food advergames in developing childhood obesity. The participants ranged in age from 5 to 10 years old. Eighty children were recruited both from public elementary schools and several parent email listser. Children were brought to a classroom where they were randomly assigned to either watch or play an advergame created for the study. The goal of the game was to use the “city glider man” to grab and collect as many balloons or cereal boxes as possible. To manipulate brand integration, two versions of the game were created: one with the brand integrated into game play and the other with the brand in the background. Following the game, closed-ended questions were used to assess the child’s feeling of telepresence, attitude toward the stimulus cereal brand, perceived taste of the cereal, and request for cereal purchase. The interviewer administered the questionnaire verbally, asking the child the questions and presenting response options as pictures asking the child to point to the best answer.

This study offers evidence that active play versus passive watching and brand integration in the game have significant effects on the child’s attitudes, taste perceptions, and purchase requests for brands placed in a game. Children
who played the game reported higher telepresence, persuasion knowledge activation, and cereal taste expectations than children who watched the game. The children in the brand integration condition thought the cereal would taste better and were more likely to ask an adult to buy them that cereal. In this experiment, children were exposed to the game only once. It is likely that increased exposure through repeated play would lead to even more positive responses to the brand. Therefore, the results support the concerns that playing an advergame may have a stronger influence than watching a television commercial. Further study is warranted, as is further attention by regulators and policy makers interested in improving children’s health. References are available upon request.

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SUCCESS OF MEDICAID REFORM: POLICY OR IMPLEMENTATION?

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SUMMARY

West Virginia was one of the first states that implemented a redesigned Medicaid program, as allowed by the Federal Deficit Reduction Act of 2005. This Medicaid redesign came to be known as Mountain Health Choices, emphasizing the personal responsibility of the recipient as key to holding down program costs and encouraging better health outcomes. The program was rolled out in 2007 and recipients were given a choice of plans. They could choose between a “Basic Plan” and an “Enhanced Plan.” Each plan offered a different package of health care benefits, with the Basic Plan limiting benefits to those mandated by the federal government and the Enhanced Plan offering a stronger focus on disease prevention and health promotion and greater coverage of certain care (e.g., prescription drug coverage). By July 2009, the number of those enrolled in the Enhanced program had reached 22,225 members—approximately 13.2 percent of the eligible Medicaid population—a disappointing result. Using a probabilistic survey of Medicaid members as well as West Virginia Medicaid health records of all members, we examine how assumptions about the Medicaid recipient population might have impacted policy design; the effectiveness of communication strategies to inform Medicaid recipients about policy change, and how differing levels of health status and health care needs may affect recipients’ action in the face of policy change.

A stratified random sample of 4,000 MHC-eligible members was selected. We collected 1,073 usable responses, for a response rate of 26.8 percent. Respondents were either the adult Medicaid recipient or the parent/guardian of the child member. In addition to survey data, we incorporated information on beneficiaries from Medicaid claims and enrollment data (referred to hereafter as “administrative data”) for the West Virginia Mountain Health Choices population. The administrative data were pulled at the end of February 2009 and reflect medical care from January 2005 to December 2008. The data include 126,671 members over the time period, resulting in almost six million person-month observations for all months and years for which we have data.

While the primary tool for communication to Medicaid members was the mail (i.e., the re-enrollment package), respondents were asked to rate nine sources of information from impersonal (e.g., mailed information, media, internet) to personal and/or intermediary (e.g., doctors and family members). The respondents considered information obtained from the mail to be the most helpful (32.6% indicating that the mailing was “very helpful”). Second to this was information from doctors (19.7% “very helpful” vs. doctors, z = 6.86, p < 0.01). Despite investment in a number of additional information sources (media, telemarketing), these media, as well as sources largely outside the control of Medicaid (pharmacists, internet, community groups, friends, family and welfare case workers), were viewed as not particularly helpful (all rated significantly less helpful than doctors at p < 0.01.)

While there was a high level of health comprehension awareness across the groups (as measured by several literacy measures, respondents reported general unfamiliarity with core components of the Mountain Health Choices program that are central to its design and a focal point of redesign rhetoric. For example, in order to better coordinate care Medicaid beneficiaries were to have a “medical home” or a primary care provider or practice as the gateway to their access to health services. Yet the study found that only 10 percent of the respondents were familiar with the term—most significantly only 15 percent of those on the Enhanced Plan, who were mandated to have a medical home, had heard of the term. Many recipients were not sure as to which plan they belonged. Of those who defaulted into the Basic Plan, 33 percent of adult recipients reported that they did not know that there were two plans from which to choose. This lack of awareness was even more pronounced for parents and
A major finding from the evaluation of the West Virginia Mountain Health Choices program is that there are four very different groups of the MHC participants, and that each group has its own needs and motivations. Parents/guardians of children in the Enhanced Plan are more satisfied with their plan (average 4.21 in Enhanced Plan versus 3.99 in Basic Plan, $F = 5.747, p < .05$) and are more educated (85.9% completing high school vs. 77.3% of Basic Plan member’s parents, $z = 2.763, p < .05$) than the parents/guardians of children in the Basic Plan. The adult Mountain Health Choices sample is less healthy and less active than the child sample. The adults enrolled in the Enhanced Plan have the highest level of obesity (Enhanced Plan BMI = 31.79 vs. Basic Plan BMI = 26.72, $t = 29.181, p < .01$) and have the highest usage of health-related services (Enhanced Plan = 1.39 mean doctor visits vs. Basic Plan = 0.74 mean doctor visits) of any other group.

It has long been recognized in health policy that there are distinct information asymmetries between patients and providers which lends to an inefficient market. The WV Medicaid Redesign experience suggests that the original plan design regarding the role of intermediaries should have been expanded. Our findings also suggest that the low-income Medicaid population should not be treated as a homogenous group. In their choice of plans, WV Medicaid members appeared to choose their healthcare plan based on prior utilization. This may provide a key insight as to why adults in Mountain Health Choices enrolled in the Enhanced Plan—they needed the additional services, particularly the use of more than four prescriptions per month. Basic Plan members were healthier and had fewer doctor visits and prescriptions per month.

In analysis of the survey and the administrative data, it is evident that adults who enrolled in the Enhanced Plan tended to have worse self-reported health and higher numbers of doctor visits and prescriptions per month than those adults who selected the Basic Plan. The WVU study’s review of administrative data found that this is especially the case with adult Medicaid recipients. Thus, those needing greater care are more likely to have enrolled in the program with greater coverage.

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MINIMUM PAYMENT WARNINGS AND INFORMATION DISCLOSURE EFFECTS ON CONSUMER DEBT REPAYMENT DECISIONS

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SUMMARY

Public policymakers encourage lenders to disclose loan cost information to enable borrowers to make more-informed debt repayment decisions. For example, current regulation requires credit card lenders to include a “minimum payment warning” on borrowers’ monthly statements, with the goal of encouraging credit card borrowers to make larger monthly repayments each month – and, consequently, decrease their debt levels. Prior research suggests that credit card statement information about the minimum required payment amount acts as an anchor on repayment amount decisions (Stewart 2009), and supplemental information about the associated payoff time duration and cost of repaying the minimum amount does not appear to counter that negative anchoring effect (Navarro-Martinez et al. 2011).

One element of the CARD Act minimum payment warning is information, included on monthly credit card statements, about how much a borrower would need to repay each month to pay off the outstanding balance within three years. The additional “3-year information” makes it easier for credit cardholders to assess the cost and time trade-offs between repaying the minimum required amount versus a specific larger amount (hereafter referred to as “the 3-year amount”). This research examines the influence of disclosing 3-year information on repayment decisions.

The 3-year information could serve as a “nudge” (Thaler and Sunstein 2008) for credit cardholders, leading borrowers who might have repaid the minimum required amount to repay more. At the same time, it is also plausible that consumers might reduce their repayment amount once the 3-year amount is made salient to them. First, if people are indeed anchoring on the minimum required payment amount, then making an alternative repayment amount salient provides an alternative anchoring point (Mussweiler, Strack, and Pfeiffer 2000). Consumer repayments could be drawn upward or downward to the anchoring point. In addition to that, Soll, Keeney, and Larrick (2011) found that highly numerate consumers tend to overestimate the repayment amount required to pay off a loan in three years, while the opposite was true for those low in numeracy. However, when information resembling the minimum payment warning was presented, tendency to overestimate and to underestimate were reduced drastically. To the extent that borrowers’ repayment choice is influenced by their understanding of payoff time duration versus repayment amount, presenting the 3-year information could lead some (underestimating) consumers to increase repayment, while leading other (overestimating) consumers to decrease their repayment.

An experimental study, with 462 adult U.S. consumers, examined the effect of disclosing 3-year information (3-year amount, interest cost, and/or time to pay off debt) on repayment decisions. Participants were shown a hypothetical credit card bill and asked how much of the credit card balance they would repay. A series of econometric analyses were conducted to test the effects of information type, controlling for participants’ income, financial knowledge, attitude toward debt, temporal orientation, and credit card repayment habits. Results indicate that, while disclosing information about the impact of repaying the minimum required amount each month had little impact on repayment decisions, disclosing similar information about the repaying the 3-year amount yielded a robust effect on repayment decisions. Repayment amounts were “drawn toward” the 3-year amount whenever any 3-year information was disclosed, increasing the proportion of participants choosing the 3-year amount. Interestingly, interest cost and payoff time information had different effects: 3-year cost information decreased the proportion of people repaying less than the 3-year amount, while the 3-year payoff duration decreased the proportion repaying more than the 3-year amount. Thus disclosing 3-year information may have the intended consequence of increasing repayment for some consumers, while at the same time having the unintended consequence of decreasing repayment for others.

These results have important implications for regulatory policies as well as lender practices: simply informing borrowers about the relatively detrimental effects of repaying the minimum may do little to change behavior; instead, a “nudge” (Thaler and Sunstein 2008) in the form of highlighting an alternative repayment option is more likely to change repayment behavior. At the same time,
policymakers and firms need to consider that calling attention to alternative repayment amounts also comes with an accompanying risk that borrowers’ repayments could decrease if the salient alternative amount is lower than what the consumer would have chosen to repay had no information been disclosed at all. This suggests that information disclosure is likely to be most effective when it can be tailored to different customer segments. References are available upon request.

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THE ROLE OF MENTAL ACCOUNTING IN PHILANTHROPIC DECISION-MAKING

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SUMMARY

Giving and volunteering have been described as “activities that are integral to [our] social fabric . . . [and that] combine to define and shape the communities and environments in which we live” (Hall et al. 2009). Our research aims to understand how donors manage their giving of time and money with a specific focus on the role of mental budgeting in charitable decision-making. Understanding how donors set mental accounts for charitable giving and subsequently allocate expenditures to them will enable non-profit organizations to better position their appeals for support from both first-time and repeat donors.

The primary mechanism to be examined in this study is the psychological process of “mental budgeting,” which refers to how people allocate and expend their monetary resources with “mental budgets” (e.g., Heath and Soll 1996). Cheema and Soman (2006) define mental accounts as “self-control devices that consumers employ to prevent excess spending and consumption.” By curtailing further expenses once a particular budget is exhausted, consumers can control spending in any specific category. However, how consumers frame any particular expenditure relative to the established mental accounts can significantly influence the resulting consumption behavior. Products or services that can be expensed against more than one account are more likely to be made, since if one account is exhausted, the consumer may expense against another available account (e.g., allocating a restaurant purchase against an entertainment rather than a food account) (Heath and Soll 1996; Cheema and Soman 2006). Unexamined to this point is whether consumers set mental budgets for charitable giving similar to how they do so for their ordinary consumption categories. Or, if consumers do not have explicit mental budgets for charitable giving, to which mental accounts do they expense gifts?

The second psychological mechanism of interest is that of underlying motivations for philanthropic behavior. As substantial research exists already in this area (e.g., Bendapudi et al. 1996); our goal is not to replicate it but rather to examine the moderating role these motives may play in the setting and management of mental budgets related to charitable giving. We use a dichotomous categorization of motives as either “self-interested” or “other-interested” (i.e., philanthropic) to explore how salient motives influence consumer charitable decision-making. It has been suggested that different motives may cause the donor to access different mental budgets (Stinson and Howard 2010a), influencing their decision-making.

Methodology

We conducted semi-structured depth interviews (each approximately one hour in length) with 30 men and 12 women (n = 42), all of whom self-identified as having made donations of time and/or money in the past and had varying financial capacities and cause preferences. Seven of the interviews were conducted in pairs (married couples), and all were conducted in locations chosen by the respondents to maximize their comfort level. Both authors independently performed axial coding (using Nvivo 9) of the interview transcripts (Strauss and Corbin 1990), identifying patterns of experiences both within individual interview transcripts and across informants’ interviews (Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1989). After achieving consensus regarding the themes, we mapped these emergent themes onto the study’s research questions.

Findings

Do Charitable Mental Accounts Exist? Our interviews with donors suggest that many donors do in fact have a charitable budget, with some being more specific than others. For many donors, both religious and non-religious, this budget is in the 10 percent range of their income. These findings are consistent with previous reports suggesting high net worth donors give between 8 and 16.5 percent of their income annually (Bank of America 2010). Other donors report being more flexible, but still give consistent amounts year-over-year, which is a strong indication that a mental account for charitable giving exists.

Out of Which Accounts, Mental or Otherwise, Do Donors Expense Giving? Our research to-date has suggested that consumers indeed expense charitable gifts that on the surface seem very similar against completely different
types of accounts. One of the easiest examples to compare is “gifts” made to attend charitable galas and other events. Many donors note the important business and social expectations that drive participation in these events and allocate accordingly against their budgets. One donor allocated tickets to the theatre against an entertainment account, while other informants had instrumental motives that they self-identified as having nothing to do with charity. Of course, the cost of these charitable galas and events are often allocated to the traditional charitable giving budget, though even the respondents recognize that they could be otherwise classified. One donor even went so far as to suggest that charities could maximize giving by altering their positioning of such events.

Is There a Difference in the Malleability of Different Types of Accounts, and What Factors (Including Differences in Motivations for Giving) Might Influence That Malleability? Potentially most interesting from a mental budgeting perspective is the malleability of the mental account. As discussed previously, if a consumer has expended his or her budget in a given category in a normal consumption context, further expenditures in that category have been shown to be unlikely unless the expense can be allocated against another budget category (Heath and Soll 1996). This phenomenon also exists in philanthropy. And yet nearly all donors, ranging from those who are very specific about their charitable budgets to those who are more laissez-faire, admit to flexibility when motivated to give beyond what they had budgeted for. One of the important potential outcomes of allowing donors to access multiple mental budgets for expensing charitable gifts is the ability to increase the donor’s perceived capacity to give (e.g., Morewedge, Holtzman, and Epley 2007). A non-profit organization that can successfully increase the donor’s perceived capacity to give may subsequently be successful in cultivating new or additional giving from the donor. References are available upon request.

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HOW CONSUMERS PROCESS INFORMATION ABOUT A FAST FOOD RESTAURANT’S SPATIAL LOCATION: THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL IDENTIFICATION, SOCIAL DISTANCE PERCEPTIONS AND SOCIAL CONSTRUAL

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SUMMARY

Policy researchers find that consumers go to fast food restaurants that are spatially near, but they rarely consider related social factors. This research finds that social factors are so important they influence how young people process spatial proximity information. The social factor we consider has been frequently studied in other contexts: social identification. We find that when youth with higher social identification with people at school see a promotional coupon for a restaurant that is near (versus far) from school, it lowers their social distance perceptions or makes the restaurant seem socially closer or more likely to have friends. This results in lower or more concrete social construal, lowers self-control and increases coupon use. These effects do not obtain for youth with lower social identification. Thus our findings indicate that fast food restaurants by schools are problematic not just because of location; but also because of social closeness perceptions. Interventions should target youth with high social identification to people in schools near fast food restaurants, because these youth interpret promotions touting spatial nearness in positive social terms.

Our four experiments based on construal level theory show that social identification with people at school changes the way young people process information in a promotional coupon about a fast food restaurant’s spatial proximity to school. Study 1 shows that when the promotional coupon states the restaurant is near to (versus far from) school, young people that have greater social identification with those at school express a higher intent to redeem the coupon because they perceive the restaurant as socially less distant, i.e., more likely to have friends. This lowers their social construal, self-control and intent not to consume. These effects do not obtain for young people with lesser social identification. Overall, Study 1 demonstrates that social identification moderates spatial proximity effects. Study 2 replicated these findings in a field study that measures actual coupon redemption. It finds that young people are more likely to redeem a coupon for a fast food restaurant near to (versus far from) school, but only if they have relatively high social identification with people at school and otherwise not. Study 3 measures social identification behaviorally through social activity, and finds the same pattern of results.

Finally, Study 4 manipulates both social and spatial proximity information in the fast food restaurant promotional coupon. It provides support for our assumption that young people with higher social identification to others at their school expect to see friends at a nearby fast food restaurant, and this is what they find attractive about the restaurant. Specifically, Study 4 shows that the same effects obtain when young people are explicitly told that friends will be at the restaurant near school, as compared to when measurement shows that young people have higher social identification with people at school (Study 1).

These findings extend two theoretical literatures, in health policy and consumer behavior. Health policy research has focused on how spatial proximity to fast food restaurants encourages unhealthy eating, while consumer research has examined how social influences encourage unhealthy eating. Our work is one of the first to examine how spatial and social factors interrelate. We study spatial proximity to a restaurant and social identification with people at a nearby school and document their interactive effects on social distance perceptions, social construal, self-control, intent and behavior. We are also the first to show these effects in a fast food restaurant context; and to show the dominance of social over spatial thoughts for young people during the construal process.

Our findings are substantively important because they identify new options that policymakers have to try to weaken the adverse health effects of nearby fast food restaurants. Seeking bans on fast food restaurants near schools and other vulnerable areas is not their only option. Our studies indicate that promotions touting fast food restaurants as being near often trigger perceptions about friends being there that encourage young people to go there. Hence, policymakers may want to encourage young people to socialize at local healthy places like gyms, clubs,
and sports facilities, and to encourage local healthy places to promote themselves as places for young people to socialize. Policymakers may also want to discourage student groups like sports teams and clubs from meeting and celebrating at unhealthy fast food restaurants near schools, which is currently quite common.

Finally, policymakers may want to try to counteract promotions for unhealthy fast food restaurants near schools by suggesting there are better places to find friends and socialize. Our findings indicate it may be especially useful to target these messages to those with higher social identification with people at their school. Young people seek out places where they can find friends and socialize, and they are attracted to nearby fast food restaurants for this reason. They will continue to be unless concerted efforts are made to provide them with alternative healthier places to find friends and socialize that are equally attractive.

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DISASTER PREPAREDNESS PLANNING FOR DISABLED POPULATIONS: THE VIEW THROUGH MARKETING’S LENS

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SUMMARY

The aftermath of any disaster whether natural, triggered by man-made efforts or a convergence of both can be fatal to human lives, costly to societal development, and detrimental to environmental growth. Preparedness and resilience have for years been the mantra for planning and coping with disasters. Yet some of the most at risk people are often neglected before, during, and after a disaster hits. Of the many vulnerable social groups living in society today, persons with disabilities are some of the most neglected people when disasters strike. Clearly, the paucity of preparedness plans for disabled people during disasters reveal an ignored area of public policy that undoubtedly warrants immediate research interest.

In response to the lack of disaster preparedness plans that prioritize the needs of disabled individuals, this paper conceptualizes a risk preparedness model for persons with disabilities. We pull from existing literature to develop a plan dedicated to understanding this vulnerable market segment in times of risky circumstances. We do this by examining the emergency preparedness plans of different government and nonprofit agencies to see if they address the disaster needs of disabled individuals. From this, we outline a preparation scheme that consists of risk assessment, evacuation planning, and aftermath preparation.

In terms of assess for the disabled, this paper promises a preparedness model customized to the needs of these vulnerable consumers (mobility, hearing, sight, speech, and cognitively impaired). Specifically, the paper shows the failure of disaster services to consider these market segments, and thus offer a new insight into how the government, nonprofits, relief organizations, and volunteers can improve evacuation plans that mitigate the impact of disaster aftermath on the varying disabled population.

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SOCIAL JUSTICE GAPS WITHIN THE SCHOOL BREAKFAST AND LUNCH PROGRAMS: THE NEED FOR EFFECTIVE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

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SUMMARY

Although Federal funding is in place to provide nutritious meals at reduced or no cost to low-income families, and states have laws in place requiring school breakfast and lunch for qualified children, evidence indicates that not all school districts follow through and provide such meals (Advocates for Children of New Jersey 2011). This is problematic since it is well documented that childhood diets lacking in basic foods, vitamins, and nutrients cause children to develop early health problems, growth deficiencies, and other health programs.

Commuri and Gentry’s (2010) Family Policies Model provides an idea framework to examine this issue. Their fundamental premise argues that even though family public policies are in effect, it is not always clear whether those policies are accomplishing their intended goals. Families and their needs may inadvertently “fall through the cracks,” as a result of ineffective implementation of programs designed to assist families in meeting their needs.

The paper focuses on one aspect of failed family policies in the United States: the failure of federally-funded school breakfast and lunch programs to be fully utilized in combating childhood hunger and its subsequent malnutrition. In addition, the paper will explore one particular unintended outcome and a growing phenomenon across the United States: the increasing number of families turning to food banks and supplemental meal programs to provide for their basic meal needs for husbands, wives, and children. A macromarketing approach is used to ask whether the safety net of policies is adequate to provide support in times of need. Critics argue that state and local school systems have difficulty in connecting the dots with governmental food supplement plans and those from social agencies responsible for meeting the needs of hungry persons throughout the country.

The National Center on Family Homelessness identifies multiple causes for growing hunger and homelessness in society: unemployment, underemployment, sudden loss of job, mental and physical problems preventing employment, and so forth. When this occurs, families and family members are likely to experience vulnerability as they exist in a “state of powerlessness arising from an imbalance in marketplace interactions or from the consumption of marketing messages and products (Baker, Gentry, and Rittenburg 2005). While governmental support systems do exist, unfamiliarity with the complexities of the welfare system may discourage families from applying for benefits. Families in this situation become “doubly vulnerable” since they do not have immediate access to beneficial means, such as food stamps, nor the knowledge of how to obtain them (Schultz and Holbrook 2009).

Using the specific example of food programs in New Jersey public schools, the author explores the growth in childhood hunger due to failed public policies and unused Federal funding. Additionally, best practices are reviewed and a set of research propositions will be offered for systematic investigation. A public action group, Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ), is critical of the failure of New Jersey schools to provide federally funded school breakfasts to eligible students. In offering suggestions to New Jersey school administrations, the ACNJ looked at the costs and benefits of school food programs, as well as the strengths of successful schools. For instance, one estimate indicates that New Jersey districts would be provided with an aggregate sum of $21.7 million more per year if they could meet the goal that 60 percent of “school lunch children” also received school breakfasts as well. The fact remains: over 70 percent of eligible children are not served.

The following research propositions are offered in building a proposed research agenda:

P1: When family policies fail to provide access to regular nutritional foods, families are likely to adopt alternative strategies such as food pantries, inexpensive less-nutritious food, going hungry, or contacting social service agencies.

P2: School breakfast and lunch programs are likely to succeed when:

a. Concrete goals are set (e.g., percentages of children fed per school or district),
b. Well-performing schools are rewarded; poorly performing receive support,

c. Best practices of well-functioning school districts are widely shared,

d. Programs are available to help teachers integrate breakfast and lunch management into their classrooms,

e. Bus and school opening schedules are correlated with ample time for meal production and consumption,

f. “Breakfast in the Classroom” programs make “universal breakfast” available to all children, rather than segregating the “poor kids,” and missing the opportunity for breakfast if a bus runs late or a parent cannot bring their children early enough for the breakfast program.

P3: Children and youth who are segregated into cafeteria for Federally-funded food may refuse to participate due to perceived stigma of being “welfare families” or “poor kids.”

P4: Parents and families who have grown through several generations of public assistance may need training in proper nutrition and the availability of supplemental food programs and nutritional education. References are available upon request.

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SOCIAL SERVICE DELIVERY RESEARCH FOR PROCESS REDESIGN AND POLICY REFORM: A SERVICES MARKETING PERSPECTIVE

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SUMMARY

The lived service experience of consumers dependent on public social services may be qualitatively different than that of typical service consumers. Dependency can create a power imbalance in favor of providers which can lead to service delivery problems untenable in typical service settings. It is reported that public social services, such as food assistance, are provided with little consideration of consumers’ immediate needs (Harrington 1981; Shipler 2005). This creates strain in social service consumers’ daily life. While researchers have explored historical (i.e., Hill, Hirschman, and Bauman 1996), political and moral ideology (i.e., Dobelstein 1999), and unintended consequences perspectives when examining social service provision (i.e., Caplow 1994); this research takes a different approach. It discusses service delivery in social service provision to examine how delivery structures and processes in social services are different from more typical services. From this, questions are developed about how these differences might impact consumers. The goal is to identify potential issues in social service delivery, to offer a limited set of possible remedies, and to stimulate research on the effect of social service delivery design and policy on consumers. Institutional social programs operate by delivering resources into the hands of consumers with the assumption that this will make consumers’ marketplace transactions more equitable and eventually help consumers to empowered self-sufficiency. These potential benefits notwithstanding, reports describe the difficult interactions consumers have with social services and its caseworkers; consumers are made to feel embarrassed and harassed, benefits are delayed, and in some cases benefits are wrongly denied (Caplow 1994; Morgan 1993; Shipler 2005). These consumers are already economically disadvantaged; many tend to pay more and receive lower levels of service, quality, and variety largely due to the composition of their marketplace (Alwitt 1995; Andreasen 1993). The services designed to help them respond to these conditions should not exacerbate their disadvantage and vulnerability. A call for transformative service research (TSR) has made explicit the need to apply the cumulative knowledge in service marketing to identify how, when, and where services and service providers do or can impact the well-being of consumers, their families, communities, and society at large (Anderson, Ostrom, and Bitner 2011; Ostrom et al. 2010; Rosenbaum et al. 2011). From this perspective, drawing on diverse literature streams, this research identifies important issues in public social service provision – resource allocation, limited resource sensitivity, and caseworker/client interactions – to confront with what is accepted as “appropriate” from a service research perspective. “Appropriate” service is viewed through the Service-Dominant Logic of Marketing lens. The service logic approach to marketing focused on co-creation of value, relationships, customer centricity, and intangible resources and offers foundational premises for the understanding of marketing and marketing systems (Vargo and Lusch 2004a, 2006, 2008). This, coupled with admonition that service represents the provision of benefits for other parties (Vargo and Morgan 2005), suggests that the service logic of marketing could apply directly to provision of social services and that one will find vast similarities to what is suggested by the logic of how service systems should operate and what is occurring in social service provision. Unfortunately an examination of the social service issues raised suggests this is not the case (for information on original premises in service logic see: Lusch and Vargo 2006; Vargo and Lusch 2004a, 2008). Each social service delivery issue is discussed at length, a service logic perspective is provided, and questions are developed to stimulate further research.

This research contributes to marketing’s discussion on social justice for all consumers by focusing on consumer well-being as the outcome of service redesign and reform. It synthesizes disparate literature streams to identify three service delivery themes in social service provision for future study. Further, it applies current service thought to an important ethical and socially relevant issue (Bagozzi 1975; Gummesson 2008; Penaloza 2006; Rust 2006; Vargo and Lusch 2008); focuses on processes and structures that contribute to vulnerability rather than on “who” is vulnerable (Baker, Gentry, and Rittenburg 2005); and proposes research to inform consumer-centric change rather than reform based on the appeasement of more mainstream constituents (Hill and Macan 1996b).
TSR is aimed at improving the well-being of service stakeholders by understanding the implications of service provision (Anderson et al. 2011; Rosenbaum et al. 2011); this research identifies social service consumers as important service stakeholders. It ends with a call to action for transformative service researchers to explore social service provision for the benefit of consumers, families, communities and society at large. References are available upon request.

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