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PROCEEDINGS

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When Do Business Buyers Offer Suppliers a “Second Chance” After Being Betrayed? The Moderating Role of Emotions of Business Buyers in Betrayal Incidents

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THE RESPONSE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS TO COVID-19

Dr. Prachi Gala (Kennesaw State University), Dr. Atefeh Yazdanparast (Clark University), Dr. Leonard Berry (Texas A&M University), Dr. Chris Dede (Harvard University), Dr. David Fithian (Clark University), Dr. Sandeep Krishnamurthy (University of Washington Bothell)
International & Cross-Cultural Marketing
A CROSS-CULTURAL INVESTIGATION OF CONSUMER IMPULSIVE BUYING BEHAVIOR DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Florida State University - Pei Wang

Florida State University - Sindy Chapa

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KEYWORDS: consumer behavior; cross-cultural communication; impulsive shopping, COVID-19 Pandemic.

Description: This study uses the S-O-R framework to identify the determinants of impulsive purchase behavior among Americans and Chinese during COVID-19 pandemic.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

A cross-culture comparison in consumer behavior is increasingly essential for online business world. The literature claims that significant differences can be found between Chinese and American consumers (e.i., Mazaheri et al., 2011; Talor et al., 1997). Similarly, it has been claimed consumers with different cultures would be motivated by various values whenever in the online or the instore decision-making process (i.e., Mazaheri et al., 2011). Hofstede’s (2005) framework of culture is usually employed to understand the role of cultural values on attitudes and behavior. He defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another” (Hofstede, 2005, p. 6). Hofstede defines five dimensions of cross-cultural distinction: power distance, masculinity, or femininity, long-term or short-term orientation, uncertainty avoidance, and individualism or collectivism. China and the United States obtain different scores in these five dimensions (Hofstede et al.,
While Americans score higher in their levels of indulgence, short-term orientation, and values related with short and impulsive buying decision, Chinese consumers rate higher in restrain and long-term orientation. Considering their differences, the research question is:

Is the American consumers’ impulsive purchasing behavior different from Chinese consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Method and Data

A two-step process was design for this study: focus group and online survey. A total sample of 440 was collected from July to September 2020. The sample was composed of 208 Americans and 232 Chinese. Of these, most respondents are between the ages of 18 and 25 in the USA (96.2%), and between 25 and 40 in China (50.53%). In the USA and China, respectively, 98.6 and 53.9 percent of the respondents were women.

As for the data analysis, first, Cronbach’s alphas were run to test reliability, the results revealed the reliability levels were above the recommended level of 0.7. Second, all variables satisfied the criteria of 0.50. Third, the model rejects three relationships: pandemic cues to perceived enjoyment, ease of navigation to HSV, and website appearance to perceived usefulness, which coefficient paths were not significant. A SEM multigroup analysis was used across dependent samples to test the invariance of the American and Chinese consumers to answer the research question. The path coefficients indicate that, among Americans, the influence of “ease of navigation” on “usefulness “web appearance” on “usefulness, and “enjoyment” are not significantly. Whereas, on Chinese consumers, the effect of “ease of navigation” on “product involvement” was not significant.

Summary of Findings
This study applies the S-O-R framework to investigate consumer impulsive behaviors while testing cross-national application of the extended model from Parboteeah et al. (2016) in the online shopping environment across the USA and China. This study also operates a multi-group analysis to explore group difference based on the proposed model. Overall, the results indicate HSV and perceived enjoyment were direct predictors of impulsive purchase behavior. The HSV was found to be a key mediator between all variables and impulsive behavior.

Additionally, the results showed a strong relation between pandemic cues, perceived usefulness, and hedonic shopping value. Even though the pandemic situations were different in USA and China during data collection, the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic cue on consumers’ impulsive behavior was supported by a multigroup analysis cross-culturally. That is, although some differences are observed on the path coefficients, the model fit well in both countries with no significant differences produced by the change in the chi squared.

**Key Contributions**

This study uses the S-O-R framework to identify the determinants of impulsive purchase behavior among Americans and Chinese during COVID-19 pandemic. The findings, the results indicated the factors of hedonic shopping value and perceived enjoyment perceived by the web are direct predictor of the Americans’ and Chinese’s urge to purchase online. In addition, the results showed a strong relation between pandemic cues and perceived usefulness, and hedonic shopping value. It explains that impulsive purchase behaviors observed during the COVID-19 pandemic. In relationship to group differences between American and Chinese consumers, the relationships between easy to navigate and perceived usefulness or perceived enjoyments, and the relationship between website appearance and the perceived usefulness, were significant among Chinese consumers, but these relations did not exist among Americans.
Overall, the proposed model suggests a three-factorial design model, in which the pandemic cue (the notion that the purchase was conducted because of the Pandemic), along with the website appearance, easy to navigate, perceived enjoyment, perceive usefulness and product involvement affected the hedonic shopping value, which was found to be a direct predictor of the urge to buy online. The perceive enjoyment was found to be directly related to both the hedonic shopping value and the urge to buy online.
PERCEIVED BRAND GLOBALNESS AND PERCEIVED BRAND LOCALNESS: A META-ANALYSIS

Statement of Key Contributions

The goal of my research is a meta-analysis of the effects of perceived brand globalness (PBG) and localness (PBL) on frequently used outcomes to provide an overall empirical state of this research stream. More precisely, my study contributes to research in two major ways.

First, while mostly positive links between PBG/PBL and a variety of outcomes (e.g., perceived brand quality) have been established, it is unclear if either PBG or PBL is statistically more related to any of the outcomes. Answering this question can guide scholars to pinpoint the more promising links in future research, while decreasing to investigate relations that are not substantiated well enough.

Second, given the rather large number of empirical studies in PBG/PBL research, the meta-analysis can answer whether the effects of PBG/PBL on a variety of outcomes are generalizable or whether they are dependent on contextual factors, such as methodological aspects or country/culture specificity. Especially the latter can be considered of special interest in the international marketing domain, since many PBG/PBL studies have been conducted in a variety of cultural backgrounds.

The meta-analysis can provide marketing/brand managers with some freedom of choice between focusing on the brand globalness or localness dimension in their communication. For instance, initial meta-analytical insights show that PBG and PBL similarly drive perceptions of brand competence. This freedom of choice is especially important when it is not easily possible to stress one dimension, e.g., managers of small brands that have rather limited options in (realistically) communicating globalness to consumers.
In contrast to this freedom of choice between focusing on brand globalness and localness, initial findings also show that some brand related variables are quasi exclusively driven by either PBG or PBL. For instance, to increase brand warmth, the data indicates that promoting brand localness (vs. globalness) could be the better option.
Extended Abstract

Introduction

One of the currently most dynamic areas in global/local brand research is the stream of perceived brand globalness (PBG) and perceived brand localness (PBL). Scholars have analyzed the effects of PBG and PBL on a variety of outcomes. However, in many studies a handful of recurring outcomes (e.g., perceived brand quality or prestige) play a central role. Further, both PBG and PBL have been shown to generally relate to these outcomes positively, leading to two research questions. First, it is unclear if PBG and PBL have rather similar effects on these outcomes or if either PBG or PBL has stronger effects on any given outcome. Second, it is also unclear if the effects of PBG and PBL on these outcomes are dependent on contextual factors (e.g., research methodology or cultural variations across countries) or if the effects generally hold, disregarding contexts.

In an effort to shed light on these questions, I am conducting a meta-analysis of the PBG/PBL literature. More specifically, I focus on the main and common relations that have been established between PBG/PBL and outcome variables, namely (perceived) brand quality, prestige, warmth, competence and credibility as well as brand attitude and purchase intention. This extended abstract provides initial insights on the first research question, based on a meta-analytical subsample of twelve peer reviewed and published articles with 19 studies.

Brief Conceptual Background

PBG and PBL are rooted in Steenkamp, Batra, and Alden's (2003) paper and found their way in many articles thereafter. PBG is defined as consumers’ belief about whether a brand is available and consumed globally. On the other hand, PBL (or: brand local icon value) captures the degree to which a brand represents a specific country and its culture (Steenkamp, Batra, and Alden 2003; Swoboda, Pennemann, and Taube 2012). Both constructs are not the poles of a single continuum but are rather two distinct brand dimensions and therefore
independent (Dimofte, Johansson, and Ronkainen 2008). For instance, from the perspective of an American consumer, Nike might be evaluated as high in PBG and PBL, since it is globally available and very likely represents American values. Further, both PBG and PBL are subjective, hence capture perceptions of consumers, rather than objective/actual globalness or localness (e.g., the number of countries in which a brand is available).

In the past, PBG and PBL have been linked to perceived brand quality and prestige (e.g., Sichtmann and Diamantopoulos 2013; Xie, Batra, and Peng 2015), brand attitude and purchase intention (e.g., Halkias, Davvetas, and Diamantopoulos 2016), while more recent research also considered their effects on brand warmth, competence and credibility (e.g., Kolbl, Arslanagic-Kalajdzic, and Diamantopoulos 2019; Mandler, Bartsch, and Han 2020). Even though PBG and PBL have been shown to (partially) drive these outcomes, it is unclear if either dimension (PBG or PBL) is related stronger to any given specific outcome. Furthermore, the role of contextual aspects should be analyzed to uncover whether the effects of PBG and PBL generally hold. Key contextual factors in this respect could be related to the many countries and cultures in which PBG/PBL research has been undertaken.

The goal of my research is to meta-analytically integrate the empirical findings of PBG/PBL research to answer these two questions. The figure shows the main conceptual idea, including selected moderators across three categories (i.e., study design, market and sample characteristics).

**Methodology**

As a first step, I conducted a literature search of published and peer reviewed research articles in Web of Science and EBSCO, using the search terms “perceived brand globalness”, “perceived brand localness”, “brand iconness” and “local icon brand”. While allowing for every publication outlet or date toward the past, I set the cut-off date to December 31, 2020. The search resulted in a total of 76 articles. After full paper screening, I excluded
nonempirical articles and articles that did not incorporate PBG or PBL in their empirical studies, which resulted in 28 articles. Afterwards, I extracted all relevant information from the articles. However, in this abstract and as an initial analysis I only considered a subsample of articles that directly provided correlations. Since the vast majority of research incorporates PBG and PBL as continuous variables, the correlation coefficient is the ideal meta-analytic effect size measure for the meta-analysis. Furthermore, I only considered articles with outcome variables (i.e., perceived brand quality, prestige, warmth, competence, credibility, attitude, purchase intention), which were investigated in two or more articles. This resulted in a subsample of 19 studies across twelve articles.

**Initial Results and Outlook**

I conducted a random effects meta-analysis using R and the metafor package, running separate calculations for PBG and PBL with every outcome variable. In total, the analysis amounts to 78 correlations. The table provides an overview of the results. With the exception of four relations (i.e., PBG/brand warmth, PBG/brand credibility, PBG/brand attitude, PBL/perceived brand quality), all correlations are significant at the .001 level. Hence, generally speaking, the analysis shows that many relations between PBG/PBL with different outcomes appear to be well grounded empirically.

Regarding the first research question, the table shows that (1) PBG and PBL are apparently similarly related to some outcomes (e.g., brand competence and purchase intention), while (2) there might be (larger) differences regarding other outcomes (e.g., brand warmth and brand attitude). In order to draw final conclusions however, I am currently conducting tests to answer if differences (e.g., correlation of PBG/brand warmth < PBL/brand warmth) are indeed statistically significant.

To answer the second research question, I will conduct a meta-regression to uncover if PBG and PBL’s effects on the outcomes hold generally or if they are dependent on context.
factors (see Figure). Moreover, I will extend the meta-analysis on a larger, hence final sample.

This sample will include all relevant studies that I already identified as well as other published and unpublished work (e.g., dissertations, my own studies in the area, unpublished studies of other scholars).

Since I am already in an advanced stage of the meta-analysis, I am confident that final results will be ready at the 2021 AMA Summer Academic conference.
Figure: Conceptual model of the meta-analysis, including selected moderators
Table: Meta-analytic correlations (random-effects model) of perceived brand globalness and localness with common outcome variables

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IV = independent variable, DV = dependent variable, k = number of effect sizes, r = effect size (correlation coefficient), LLCI and ULCI = upper and lower-level confidence intervals; * p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001.
References


THE IMPACT OF DISRUPTIONS IN GLOBAL TRADE AGREEMENTS ON MULTINATIONAL FIRMS' USE OF INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

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Satish Jayachandran, University of South Carolina
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Keywords: trade wars, strategic international alliance, value creation, value appropriation, business model

Description: We explore the impact of trade wars on multinational firms’ usage of strategic alliances with partners in the affected host country, and in particular whether there is variation based on their focus on value creation or value appropriation.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question
How do trade wars impact multinational firms' use of strategic international alliances as a key strategic factor in their efforts to grow (value creation) and leverage (value appropriation) their
market-based assets? There is sparse prior research that addresses this question, which has both theoretical, policy, and managerial significance. Prior research has implied that multinational firms will leverage strategic alliances as a response to trade wars with the goal of mitigating protectionist pressures from rival firms in the host country (Mo, 1999). The expectation is that focal firms will benefit from alliances with a foreign firm that has superior or complementary resources. Therefore, alliances with host country firms could see an uptick after trade barriers are imposed. However, international strategic alliances could vary in their emphasis on value creation or appropriation, and it is not clear how trade barrier disruptions affect alliances based on their emphasis. We argue that trade barriers will lead to a reshaping of multinational firms’ business models as firms are forced to reconsider their approaches to value creation and appropriation.

**Method and Data**

The sample for our study was obtained from Refinitiv’s Securities Data Company (SDC) Platinum™ Joint Ventures/Strategic Alliances database, popular in the academic literature. The initial sample included 34,759 strategic alliances, of which 10,131 were domestic (consisting of only US firms) and 24,628 were international, announced between January 2017 and March 2020. We extracted all US-Chinese alliances in the industries affected by the tariff announcement. These alliances were used to form experimental or treated group for the difference-in-difference analysis. To form the control group, we selected alliances between US partners in the affected SIC codes so that we have a set of similar alliances that are not affected by the new tariff barriers.
Summary of Findings

Our results indicate that business models with reference to international alliances to respond to the disruption caused by trade wars. Specifically, in the 18-month period after the tariff announcement associated with the US-China trade war, alliances between US and Chinese firms with a focus on value appropriation decreased while those with a focus on value creation increased.

Key Contributions

We make three contributions to the international business and marketing literatures. First, we examine the impact of an important disruption to the international business environment, trade barriers, on firms’ use of international strategic alliances as part of their business models. Though strategic alliances are an important part of a firm’s business model, how trade wars impact them has not received adequate attention in the literature. Second, we show that a more nuanced view that considers the nature of international strategic alliance is important for understanding how the business model changes after the initiation of a trade war. Third, we highlight how knowledge-based alliances are perhaps more durable and important even in a disruptive environment where trade barriers and other restrictions are employed.

References are available upon request.
THE INFLUENCE OF LANGUAGE ON ATTITUDES TOWARD BRANDS

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Keywords: natural language processing, language, gender, stereotypes, branding

Description: The syntactic gender class assigned to brand names in 20 languages is associated with stereotypical and prejudicial attitudes toward brands as well as variations in consumer preferences.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Businesses operating globally face multiple challenges due to the differences in the sociocultural environment. One important component of this environment is the dominant language of a region or country. The effectiveness of marketing communications, whether focused on advertising, branding, or promotions, is influenced by the language in which the message is communicated. Therefore, businesses need to be cognizant of how messages may be perceived or even change once translated.

Forty percent of world languages are gendered and the speakers of these languages represent a majority of the world’s population. Gendered languages are those in which pronouns and inanimate objects receive a masculine or feminine classification. Importantly, the assignment of a gender class in gendered languages is arbitrary, especially for new brand names being introduced in a region. Thus, Coca-Cola has a feminine class in Spanish, but a masculine class in
French. Recognizing this, it is worth asking: Do such gender assignments change how consumers perceive or relate to the brand?

**Method and Data**

To assess the relative associations between constructs, we utilize distributed language representations. Such representations are a set of low-dimensional dense vectors, typically referred to as word embeddings or word vectors, with one vector for each unique word in the corpus. The vectors are taken to be representations of each word in a geometric space, which allows for the use of common metrics to assess their relative orientations or similarities. Given a set of trained language models, the similarities between words can be calculated using cosine similarity, a metric of orientation. We utilized two lexicons, or groups of words: brand words and valence words. The brand words consisted of 30 different brands selected to represent five common product categories: beverages, automobiles, personal care, snack foods, and technology.

Once the similarity between each brand word and each valence word is calculated, a hierarchical model in which the gender class assigned to brands (e.g., masculine, feminine) is nested or grouped at the level of the language. This model specification recognizes the partial interdependence between individual brands in each gender class, and each gender class within each language.

**Summary of Findings**

After translating the 30 brand names and 50 valence words (25 positive words and 25 negative words) into each of the 20 languages, the resulting data set consisted of 10,669 brand-valence pairs. Our aim was to test whether, within a given language, those brands receiving a feminine gender classification exhibited measurably different associations than brands receiving
a masculine gender classification. In the case of positive associations, we found no significant
difference in associations when a brand was assigned a masculine versus feminine gender class
(\(\gamma = -0.0043, p = 0.3587\)). However, in the case of negative associations, brands with a
masculine versus feminine gender class assignment have significantly weaker relationships
(\(\gamma = -0.0091, p = 0.0455\); see Table 1). When covariates were added to the model to control for
cultural, political, economic, and geographic differences between speakers of various languages,
the main effect was replicated.

It is known that prejudicial gender attitudes exist around the world and across languages.
However, these results suggest that, within a given gendered language, brands that receive a
feminine gender class are more closely associated with negative constructs than brands that
receive a masculine gender class. Because the gender class assignments vary for brands across
languages, this effect occurs in spite of attitudes about any individual brand. This result suggests
that a seemingly arbitrary aspect of language, its genderedness, is associated with prejudicial
attitudes based on gender class assignment.

**Statement of Key Contributions**

Today, businesses must manage their products and brands globally. When a brand is
introduced to a new market, numerous decisions must be made, including how the brand name
will be presented. To date, little work in marketing has considered one aspect of this
presentation: how syntactic features of the language influence brand attitudes. We find that, all
else being equal, brands assigned a feminine gender class are more closely associated with
negatively valenced constructs. This result contributes to a broader literature exploring linguistic
relativity, or the influence of language on cognitions, in addition to literature considering gender
prejudice around the world. In addition, our work demonstrates how publically available data
and natural language processing can be used by researchers and practitioners to explore marketing and consumer behavior phenomena.
To Whom It May Concern,

We have picked the option “opt out of publishing”.

Best regards,
Marina Kovalchuk
WHY NOT BOTH? UTILIZING KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT CAPABILITY FOR MARKET EXPLORATION AND EXPLOITATION AMONG MEXICAN FIRMS

Jacob Almaguer, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
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Keywords: Exploration, exploitation, knowledge management, international marketing.

Description: This research examines the holistic knowledge management processes through which managers in Mexico—an underrepresented country in marketing research on knowledge management—acquire, convert, and apply knowledge for the use of explorative and exploitative strategies.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question
Many studies have considered knowledge of upmost importance and relevance to firms as they become competitive in today’s information intensive environment. In fact, this increasing importance has led the knowledge management field to reach a level in which it is a strategic resource for organizations. Companies have increasingly shifted towards meeting the needs of both new and existing customers by balancing the use of explorative and exploitative knowledge-based marketing strategies, respectively. Though this shift is relatively new in specific industries (e.g., the mobile phone service industry has historically favored new customers with deal offers until recently), extant marketing research has looked at the tradeoffs between exploration and exploitation and has focused on how companies are able to balance the two for optimized performance. In this research, we seek to further understand how firms balance this tradeoff between exploration and exploitation through an analysis of the formal processes of knowledge management in Mexican firms and how these relate to business performance.

Method and Data
To test the hypotheses, we surveyed 93 mid-level managers (40 women managers) employed throughout Mexico, including cities such as Mexico City, Puebla, Monterrey, San Luis, Matamoros, and Reynosa. These managers are employed in various industries including retail, telecommunications, financial services, manufacturing, and nonprofit. The majority of respondents had over nine years of supervisory experience (60%) and worked 2-3 levels below the CEO of the organization (39%). We adapted existing scales for knowledge management
capability (acquisition, conversion, and application), exploration and exploitation strategies, and business performance (product/service performance, market share, return on investment). We used partial least squares-based structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to test the structural relationships or paths in our research model.

Summary of Findings
In this research, we find that knowledge management capability is a strong positive predictor of exploration and exploitation strategies. Further, exploration and exploitation both strongly positively predict business performance. Our findings suggest that knowledge management has become increasingly important in Mexico, and this study exemplifies how companies in Mexico have embraced knowledge in the promotion of innovation with different adoption strategies. Particularly, this study shows that knowledge leadership has permeated various Mexican industries and that Mexican firms are poised to endeavor in both exploration and exploitation of their knowledge acquisition, conversion, and application processes for heightened marketing objectives and business performance.

Key Contribution
While focusing in analyzing how Mexican firms manage and utilize knowledge for the formulation and implementation of explorative and exploitative strategies, this research has two major contributions. First, we examine knowledge management processes in Mexico, a developing country that has not been fully investigated in previous research on knowledge management in the extant marketing literature. It is important that we examine the country level trends in emerging/developing markets to understand how mature the knowledge management
structures are among firms in these countries. Second, we provide a holistic look at the knowledge management processes from knowledge acquisition to conversion to application within the firm. Previous marketing studies have examined the importance of these processes for innovation; however, there is a lack of research that integrates these processes and the use of explorative vs. exploitative marketing strategies. This research fully integrates the processes through which a firm manages knowledge and the implications that this has for their use of explorative and exploitative strategies. Our study finds that these strategies, reflected in separate paths in our model, have virtually equal predictive power on business performance indicating the need to develop both strategies with equal vigor.
Sustainability, Social Responsibility and Public Policy
ALGORITHMIC INTERFERENCE: INFRINGEMENT ON FORMING INTIMATE ASSOCIATIONS AND THE MANIPULATION OF WEAK TIES

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Keywords: privacy, algorithms, tie strength, intimacy, social media

Description: This paper offers new insights into why algorithms should be restricted in social media contexts by theoretically arguing that they interfere with the intended goals of individuals online and deteriorate individual and societal welfare.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Online social networks, ranging from popular social media apps to professional networks online to dating sites, are heavily used across consumers today. Often, in order to promote greater usage on sites, companies use algorithms to increase user time spent. We argue that these algorithms interfere with the goals consumers seek to achieve when using social based online applications – namely for the formation of relationships with others –relying on Granovetter’s tie strength theory to explain why algorithms can negatively impact well-being at the individual and societal level.
**Research Question**

How might we frame the development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships, such that we can understand the role that algorithms have in the social network space and effectively mitigate their biases?

**Summary of Findings**

Granovetter (1973) argues that the very strength of weak ties (less intimate, distant social others) is that they provide connections that lead to greater and more diverse sets of opportunities than strong ties (close social others) do. Granovetter used the analogy of bridges to illustrate the concept. A distant social other serves as a bridge between individuals who would otherwise not become acquainted because their social circles do not include one another. But to Granovetter, these weak tie bridges are *person*-based connections between strong tie networks. We argue that the problem with algorithms interfering in online social exchanges is a problem of bridges. The algorithms replace people as the bridges. As the algorithm seeks to be “right” (e.g. optimizing screen time by displaying the most relevant posts), it is less likely that the online social media user becomes associated with a greater and more diverse set of social others and opportunities. This is contrary to what Granovetter argues and a contradiction to value of weak ties – that weak ties connect us to new social circles and increase access to information that is different from our own.

**Key Contributions**

We offer new insights into why algorithms should be restricted in social media contexts by theoretically arguing that they interfere with the intended goals of individuals online and deteriorate individual and societal welfare. Typically, arguments around the use of personal information online are not based on a clear, overarching framework. We offer such a framework
to explain the issues of algorithm use in social networks. Our work is aimed at public policy makers to aid in the development of policies around the use of algorithms in social media contexts.
BAD NEWS IS NOT ALWAYS WORSE THAN NO NEWS: A MODERATED MEDIATION MODEL OF SOURCE OF INFORMATION AND PERCEIVED INTRINSIC MOTIVES

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Keywords: corporate social irresponsibility, negative framing effect, source of information, causal attributions, experimental study

Description: This study finds that consumers show more positive responses to corporate social irresponsibility information from companies (vs. news organizations), and consumers’ perception of intrinsic motives of companies is the psychological process underlying it.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question
Based on the framing effect theory, research has found that positive or negative information forms a directional frame in corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication context, which affects consumers’ subsequent causal interpretation and moral judgment. More importantly, consumers have a higher value assessment of corporate social irresponsibility (CSIR) information. However, little research further discussed what mechanism can attenuate the negative framing effect of CSIR information.

In general, there are two types of CSIR information sources: controllable company (e.g., via company advertisement) and non-controllable company communication (e.g., via independent news organization). The purpose of this research is to address the question – Does source of CSIR information activate and make salient consumers’ attribution towards a company’s intrinsic motives, which in turn, affect consumers’ positive responses to this company? – by applying experimental design.

Method and Data
One hundred and thirty-four students were recruited from Facebook page of National Chiao Tung University, Taiwan via Qualtrics (Mage = 25.14; 55.15% female). They were randomly assigned to conditions in a 2 (CSIR information: no vs. yes) × 2 (source of information: company vs. news organization) in between-subjects design.

This research refers to Chernev and Blair’s (2015) experimental design. All participants were informed that Bright (a virtual company) is a major producer of bulbs. In the CSIR information mention condition, participants were told that the recent batch of Bright’s bulbs were found to
contain materials not specified in the product instruction, which would produce invisible blue light and cause harm to people's eyes after long-term use. In contrast, in the no-mention condition, participants were not presented with this information. In the company condition, participants were told that the information was an excerpt taken from a company’s advertisement, whereas in the news organization condition, participants were told that the information they received was an excerpt taken from a news by an independent news organization. After reading the scenario, participants answered two manipulation check items. Then participants provided their ratings on perceived intrinsic motives (5 items, α = .91), product performance (1 item), brand attitude (3 items, α = .94) and purchase intention (3 items, α = .97).

All participants can correctly recall the source of information in reading materials, and participants felt they had a more positive attitude towards information in the CSIR information no-mention condition than in the mention condition.

Summary of Findings
As expected, due to the negative framing effect, consumers showed negative intuitively attitude towards information and negative perceptions of a company’s intrinsic motives in the CSIR information mention condition. However, cuing consumers to think the CSIR information coming from a company could strengthen perceived intrinsic motives in the mention condition. In other words, consumers anticipated a company willing to expose CSIR information has really altruistic motives, attenuating the negative framing effect. Moreover, in the formation of product/brand-related attitudes and perceptions, perceived intrinsic motives was a critical mediator. Last but not least, the moderation effect of the source of information was involved before consumers made an inference about motives attributions, not afterwards.

Key Contributions
Theoretically, first, this research contributes to the literature on corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication. Although previous literature has largely examined the framing effect, it has not thoroughly examined what mechanism can attenuate the negative framing effect of corporate social irresponsibility (CSIR) information. This research indicates that source of information is the key moderator which can mitigate the damage. Second, this research found that source of information is a sufficiently powerful cue, which can cover the impact of the original negative framing effect. This finding further implies that in consumers’ value system, the effect of source of information should be an important function.

Practically, companies need to understand the information framing of CSR practices that can help or damage company reputation and image. Considering the existence of positive-negative asymmetry effect, companies especially need to be alert to the negative framing effect. As source of CSIR information is a critical cue in the formation of consumers’ perceptions of a company’s altruistic motives, companies can mitigate the damage by actively exposing CSIR information.

References are available on request.
BRAND ACTIVISM AND CONSUMER RESPONSES

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Keywords: brand activism, brand legitimacy, Instagram, social media

Description: Our study investigates whether, how, and when brand activism on social media engenders online engagement.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

(1) What is the influence of brands’ activist actions on social media on consumer engagement?

(2) What is the influence of brands’ activist trajectories on social media on consumer engagement?

(3) How can brands engender positive responses towards their activist actions?

Method and Data

Our dataset consists of two million brand Instagram posts and corresponding online engagement data (i.e., likes and comments). We use a dictionary-based approach, a transformer-based machine learning technique, matching methods, and the Heckman two-stage self-selection model to analyze the dataset.

Summary of Findings
A brand’s activist trajectory determines consumer responses toward brand activism. Consumer responses toward a brand’s activist action are contingent upon how the brand implements the activist action.

**Key Contributions**

We identify more comprehensive intermediating mechanisms explaining the advantages and perils of being an activist brand and investigate nuanced implications of brand activism using novel data that capture raw communication of brand activism on social media.
BRAND PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY SCALE

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Key words: social dimension, sustainability, branding.

Description: Develop a holistic brand perceived social sustainability scale from a consumer’s perspective.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question:

Understanding the impact of firms' actions on people and society is gaining momentum. Businesses have been facing increasing expectations from stakeholders in the past few years to include social, environmental, and governance dimensions in their corporate strategies. In the past three decades, corporate and government policies have concentrated on environmental aspects of sustainability, neglecting the social dimension. Social sustainability is the least defined and understood. To date, researchers, government, and business organizations are struggling to deliberate on Sustainable Development Goals - social dimension. Due to ambiguity over the choice of social sustainability attributes, the present research proposes to develop the social sustainability attributes that will be common across domains. We propose developing the brand-perceived social sustainability scale to base it around the UN general assembly's resolution – "Transforming our World: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development" (United Nations 2015), consisting of 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Method and Data
We adopted the scientific scale development procedure. Items were generated based on literature review, focused group discussions, and expert opinions. Both online and offline modes were employed for data collection at different locations.

**Key contributions**

Our study contributes to understanding the social dimension attributes, moreover scale is developed around sustainable development goals, which would be prevalent across the domains. Brand perceived social sustainability scale contributes to understand the social dimension from the consumer perspective and align it with firms branding activities.

“References are available upon request.”
DIRECT-TO-CONSUMER ADVERTISING IN THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY

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Keywords: Direct-to-Consumer Advertising, Pharmaceutical industry, Public Policy and Marketing, Consumer Attitudes

Description: This study examines how the loosely enforced guidelines presented by the FDA allow companies to find loopholes concerning how products can be advertised, and looks at consumers’ attitudes toward DTCA that are influenced by the information about side effects and risks, pricing information, as well as whether the actor portrayal and post-treatment lifestyle to be genuine and believable.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Pharmaceutical advertisements have been regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) since 1962, originally used as a method to influence physician-prescribing behavior. Since then, pharmaceutical advertisements have expanded to various channels of communication by way of a marketing strategy known as direct-to-consumer advertising (DTCA). Through this practice, companies can advertise medical products directly to consumers as long as certain instructions are followed. However, companies in the pharmaceutical industry took advantage of relaxed FDA laws in 1997 and rapidly grew in the DTCA market. Though legal actions have been proposed to better regulate DTC advertising, the pharmaceutical industry seems to rarely be affected, leaving room for suggestions as to how the FDA and policymakers can rethink DTC policies moving forward.

This research aims to examine consumers’ attitudes toward DTCA that are influenced by their perceptions of the information conveyed from the advertisements. Based on the literature review, we developed the following hypotheses:

H1: If participants perceived the advertisement adequately distributed information about side effects and risks associated with the drug, they would have a more positive attitude towards the advertisement.

H2: If the participants perceived the actor portrayal and post-treatment lifestyle to be genuine and believable, the attitude towards the advertisement would be more positive.

H3: If participants perceived pricing information was sufficiently discussed in the advertisement, they would have a more positive attitude towards the advertisement.
Method and Data

A total of 86 undergraduates at a U.S. university completed the survey for course credit. Three advertisements were selected to be displayed to participants. The first was produced by Gilead Science in 2018 to promote Truvada, the only drug approved to prevent the transmission of HIV. The second advertisement, released in 2015, promoted Tecfidera, a pill produced by Biogen to treat relapsing multiple sclerosis (MS). The third is a 2019 advertisement from Johnson and Johnson to promote Xarelto, a blood thinner. Each advertisement had a hypothesis to test. The Truvada commercial tested the first hypothesis, Tecfidera tested the second, and Xarelto tested the third. Ten interval-scale questions were asked to test the hypotheses. Two open-ended questions were included to collect participants’ additional thoughts on what was effective and what could be improved. The questions allowed for further explanation of what the participants’ believed made the advertisement successful or what could have been explained more clearly.

Summary of Findings

The results suggest all the three hypotheses are well supported. Perception of adequate information about side effects and risks has a significant positive effect on attitude towards the advertisement ($\alpha_1= 0.994$, $p<0.01$). Perception of the actor portrayal and lifestyle to be genuine and believable has a significant positive effect on attitude towards the advertisement ($\alpha_1= 0.409$, $p<0.01$). Perception of adequate pricing information has a significant positive effect on attitude towards the advertisement ($\alpha_1= 0.287$, $p<0.01$).

Direct-to-consumer advertising has been successful in grabbing the attention of consumers since its introduction in the 1980s and has skyrocketed into a primary method of advertising since then. Debates about DTCA effectiveness are ongoing and the industry seems to fall into a promotion-settlement cycle. The results of this research suggest DTC advertisements
should include more quantitative information about the side effects and risks associated with the drug. Consumers would likely benefit from being informed about drug pricing information (Ventola, 2011), however this information is uncommon to television advertisements. Many argue that using actual patients in commercials creates a more effective advertisement since “It’s the power of a peer,” (Kaufman, 2018). Howard Courtemanche, president of the global health care practice at Young & Rubicam, an advertising agency, stated, “If someone has been through it and has taken a drug and had a positive outcome...you want to hear that story,” (Kaufman, 2018). Should pharmaceutical companies follow Merck in hiring more “real” patients than actors, the industry could begin seeing an increased interest by consumers if they feel the advertisement and the person in it are genuine and believable, as supported in this research.

**Key Contributions**

This study examines the history of DTCA and how the loosely enforced guidelines presented by the FDA allow companies to find loopholes concerning how products can be advertised. It also looks at consumers’ attitudes toward DTCA that are influenced by the information about side effects and risks, pricing information, as well as whether the actor portrayal and post-treatment lifestyle to be genuine and believable. The results show whether participants (1) believed side effect and risk information was adequately explained in the advertisement, (2) perceived the lifestyle of the advertising actors to be genuine and believable after receiving the advertised treatment, and (3) believed pricing information about the advertised treatment was adequately explained in the advertisement, significantly influence their attitudes towards DTCA. This research provides useful information to policy makers, drug companies and marketers. The research fills a gap in the literature on the DTCA design and its impact on consumer attitudes. Limited research has been done on this topic.

References are available upon request.
DOES ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY BEAT CONVENIENCE IN ONLINE SHOPPING? AN INVESTIGATION OF EXCESSIVE PACKAGING, CUSTOMER ANGER AND LOYALTY

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**Keywords:** online shopping; delivery package excessiveness; convenience; anger

**Description:** This research investigates online shoppers’ emotional and behavioral reactions to getting a product delivered in an excessive (vs. non-excessive) package.

**EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

**Research Question**

Online shopping sales are expected to grow to 4.88 trillion US dollars in 2021; an increase of more than 300% compared to 2014. These tremendous numbers of online sales result in an increasing amount of delivery boxes arriving at customers’ doorsteps, in return producing a massive amount of packaging waste. The waste problem associated with online shopping is intensified by most delivery boxes being unnecessarily big for the product and using an unnecessary amount of filling material; that is, being excessive. The question arises how online shoppers react to excessive delivery packaging? Are online shoppers who receive a product in an excessive (vs. right-sized) delivery package less likely to repurchase from that retailer? How do they react emotionally to receiving products in excessive delivery packages?

**Method and Data**

In study 1a, we conducted a survey with 307 customers asking them about their last shopping experience. Participants indicated how likely they are to purchase products from the online retailer again. They also rated the amount of packaging material that was used to pack and ship their product. Additionally, we assessed different packaging characteristics as controls. In Study
1b, we interviewed ten heavy online shoppers about their feelings about excessive delivery packaging. In study 2a, we conducted an open association study among 218 US customers. Participants were asked to write down 3 adjectives to describe how they feel when they receive excessive packaging. In Study 2b, we conducted a two-cell (excessive vs. non-excessive delivery package) between-subjects experiment in which 152 participants indicated their loyalty intentions, their feelings of anger, as well as their perceptions of effort in handling the package.

**Summary of Findings**

Study 1a revealed that perceptions of packaging excessiveness are negatively related to online loyalty intentions when controlling for other packaging characteristics as well as for customers’ satisfaction with the delivered product and the speed of the delivery. Study 1b, uncovered that, besides perceptions of increased effort in handling the package, participants also mentioned the negative environmental impact created by excessive delivery packages.

Study 2a revealed that, in responding to receiving an excessive delivery package, more participants mentioned associations related to feelings of anger than feelings of environmental irresponsibility. Study 2b showed that the excessive (vs. non-excessive) delivery package decreased participants’ loyalty intentions through perception of effort and feelings of anger, even when controlling for feelings of environmental irresponsibility.

**Key Contributions**

Whereas existing research focuses on direct, sustainability-driven, consumption behavior, we demonstrate that excessively packaged delivery boxes lead to negative customer responses beyond customers’ environmental concerns by increasing customers’ effort in handling the
package, which results in feelings of anger. We thus broaden the scope of sustainable consumption research by demonstrating that sustainable consumption may be (indirectly) promoted by focusing on the convenience aspect of consumption. In addition, while related work has examined potential consequences of customizing the aesthetic appeal of shipping boxes, our research adds an additional layer to this stream of research by focusing on a structural dimension of delivery packaging: its excessiveness. For online retailers, our results thus caution against a reductionist view of what it means to deliver a superior shopping experience. While customers do appreciate a nicely designed delivery package, we suggest that providing a convenient experience in handling the package is at least equally important. In addition, our research also has societal implications by documenting how the promotion of a more convenient consumption solution can promote sustainable consumption choices.

References available upon request
ECO-PRODUCT LABELING:  
THE MODERATING EFFECT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MARKETING, CONSUMER  
PURCHASING EVALUATION AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE  
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Keywords

Resource-based view, competitive advantage, green new product development, green consumers, eco-product labeling

Description

Specific to green new products, this conceptual paper pairs the firm and consumer level to investigate how firm environmental marketing moderates the relationship between consumer decision making and competitive advantage.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Does consumer evaluation of green new products lead to firm competitive advantage?

Summary of Findings:

The public is becoming increasingly aware of environmental issues, altering consumption patterns to align with environmentally responsible behaviors. As a result, firms are paying more attention to green new product development. Resource-based view theorizes that firms can implement value-creating strategies contingent upon their unique resources and capabilities. Therefore, environmental corporate social responsibility considered an intangible asset, eco-labelling is utilized as a mechanism to frame the environmental superiority of products and services to gain competitive advantage. This conceptual article contributes to resource-based view theory utilizing
eco-product labeling as a moderator to investigate the relationship of consumer evaluation and competitive advantage. Specific to green new product development, more clearly, market competition as a mediator, a conceptual framework is provided to link the firm and consumer level to investigate the research question.

**Key Contributions**

Resource-based view provides that a strategic management resource can be consistent with traditional social welfare concerns (Barney, 1991). While competitive advantage appears to diminish in large competitive sets (Schamp et al., 2019), consumers make decisions relative to trade-offs between green new products (GNPs) and their traditional counterparts utilizing ethical strengths. Relying on their own positive or negative attitudes towards environmental consumption, consumers associate GNPs with perceptions of sustainable activity and credibility, leading to purchase intention; green consumers engaging in eco-friendly behaviors more willing to purchase green products.

Therefore, eco-product labeling serves as a resource that moderates the relationship between consumer purchasing decisions of the capability of GNPs and the attainment of competitive advantage (Baker & Sinkula, 2005). Identical resources, however, make it impossible to obtain competitive advantage from the first mover (Barney, 1991). Variation of eco-labeling claims and lack of regulation address this issue of homogeneity. Thus, firms can position themselves utilizing eco-labels as a mechanism to advocate for differentiation. The result of which provides the marketing manager the ability to build a reputation upon positive connotations, favorable brand attitudes, solidify legitimacy and position GNPs in the market.

**References are available upon request.**
ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL, AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE STRATEGIC GROUP DYNAMICS, AND THE ROLE OF THE CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER AND CHIEF SUSTAINABILITY OFFICER

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Keywords: ESG, Strategic group dynamics, CMO, CSO, Sustainability

This article addresses the questions of how firms’ ESG strategy evolves and how the presence of the CMO and CSO affect the ESG strategic group evolution.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

The notion of environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG) has become popular as sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) gains momentum in today’s socially conscious market. Hence, a vast amount of research studies the topic of sustainability and ESG. However, the majority of the studies focus on the effect of CSR and ESG on firm performance outcomes (i.e., downstream factors) (e.g., Luo and Bhattacharya 2009; Kang, Germann, and Grewal 2016). In contrast, with a few exceptions, research concerning the upstream factors in sustainability and ESG has been lacking (Sun and Govind 2020). Specifically, previous sustainability research fails to address the question of how a firm changes its ESG strategy over time and what upstream factors affect the changes in ESG strategy.

To address these research questions, this study investigates the role of the CMO and CSO in the ESG strategy changes over time. Specifically, we study 1) firms’ strategic group dynamics in ESG strategy, and 2) the effect of the presence of the CMO and CSO on ESG strategic group transition. In short, we seek to offer insights in terms of how firms’ ESG strategy evolves and how the presence of the CMO and CSO affect the strategic group evolution.

Method and Data

To understand the role of the CMO and CSO in the evolution of ESG strategy, we assemble the data using several sources: MSCI ESG KLD STATS database, COMPUSTAT, CRSP, and company annual report and/or sustainability report. First, for the ESG strategy, we use the MSCI KLD STATS database, which has been widely used in the academic literature (e.g., Kang, Germann, and Grewal 2016, Kotchen and Moon 2012). Second, we use the company annual
report and sustainability report to identify the presence of the CMO and CSO. Third, we obtain financial data that are used as control variables from COMPUSTAT’s annual database and CRSP. After concatenating the four databases, the preliminary analysis sample consists of 1099 observations, representing 175 firms from 2010 and 2016. These firms are S&P 500 companies from a wide range of industries.

Building on the strategic group dynamics research and upper echelon theory, we adopt the HMM approach to understand the EGS strategic group dynamics. Further, we estimate the steady-state Markov switching probability and access the effect of the CMO and CSO presences on this switching probability. This allows us to understand the role of the CMO and CSO in ESG strategic group membership change.

Summary of Findings

The goal of this research is to understand the ESG strategic group dynamics and the effect of the CMO and CSO presence on strategic group membership changes. To achieve this goal, we run empirical analysis and find that firms belong to different strategic groups and the CMO and CSO presences significantly influence a firm’s ESG strategic group evolution.

First, our model identifies four strategic groups. Strategic group 1 tends to be a dormant group whose ESG engagements are very low compared to other groups. Strategic group 2 tends to consist of firms whose environmental engagements stand out. Group 3 tends to consist of firms whose social and corporate governance engagements are high. Finally, strategic group 4 seems to have the highest levels of ESG engagements. Second, regarding the strategic group transition probability, we find that the presence of CMO increases the transition probability from strategic group 1 to group 3 and from strategic group 2 to group 4. Meanwhile, the presence of
the CMO significantly increases the transition probability from strategic group 1 to group 2. These results suggest that CMO and CSO have different roles in increasing ESG engagements at the firm, and further, they complement each other.

**Key Contributions**

Our research sheds light on sustainability and CMO research in several ways. First, our research extends current sustainability research by incorporating competitive nature in the ESG strategic group dynamics. Second, we advance sustainability research by disentangling CSR domains into the moderately aggregated level and providing an insight into three distinctive sustainability areas: Environment, Social, and Corporate governance. Third, building on the upper echelon theory, our research advances the CMO research. Germann, Ebbes, and Grewal (2015) find that CMO’s presence improves firm performance. In addition, our finding suggests that CMO’s presence can improve a firm’s ESG engagements, which reinforces the importance of CMO.

Our study has implications for the practitioners as well. First, our research suggests that CMO plays an important role in a firm’s sustainability practices. Further, our finding suggests that CMO’s role in sustainability complements CSO’s role, and a combined effort of the top management team will lead to the full sustainability engagement. Second, our research suggests that firms should understand the competitive nature of ESG strategic group dynamics. Firms are adapting their ESG strategy from their peers and it will be important to monitor peer’s ESG engagement to be competitive in the market.

References are available upon request.
Factors Affecting Food Waste Behavior in the Collectivism Egyptian Context

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Keywords: Food waste, Sustainability, Social meal, Egypt

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

It is argued that social context has a significant impact on food choices and amounts eaten (Herman et al., 2003). Although it is clear that food-based social consumption is widespread and growing, research on food waste in social context does not address the questions of (1) why food gets wasted in social meal context, and (2) how consumers make their decisions in such contexts as well as the consequences of those decisions. The current study seeks to address this gap by examining the underlying
factors affecting food waste behavior in a social meal context and the reasons behind its generation in such context in Egypt.

**Method and Data**

A qualitative research paradigm is employed. In-depth semi-structured interviews are conducted with eighteen Egyptian households to report their experiences, thoughts, and feelings while eating in a social context. A “purposive judgment sampling approach” method was employed to select participants with expert knowledge on food waste occurrence in social meal contexts. To be eligible, participants had to (1) have at least a meal daily with their usual family members, (2) have a social meal (e.g. invitations, wedding and birthday banquets, dish parties…etc.) with other individuals during the last three months, and (3) have sole or joint responsibility for food purchasing, preparation, or payment. Respondents have been selected to diversify several criteria, such as age, household size, gender, income, and education level. Participants were recruited using a mix of convenience techniques and snowball techniques. Theoretical saturation is followed to reach a point where no new categories are achieved from further data (Glaser and Strauss, 2017). Interviews were administered between January and April 2020, lasted, on average, between 40 and 90 minute, and were audio-recorded with permission and transcribed verbatim. A set of initial interview questions was prepared to cover the following topics: thoughts and feelings about eating habits, and thoughts and feelings regarding leftovers and throwing food away when eating in a group. These pre-prepared interview questions were employed only as a guide to provoke further discussion of salient topic areas regarding food waste in social meal context. Thematic analysis using grounded theory procedures following Braun and Clarke (2006) was employed to identify thematic
categories behind consumers’ beliefs, emotions and behaviors regarding food waste in a social context.

**Summary of Findings**

According to our analysis, eight overarching themes emerged independently as shown below that affect social waste behavior in the Egyptian culture.

**Social Meal Status**

Invitations and social events achieve more food waste due to upbringing, social and cultural background, the wish to be “a good provider host” and achieving guests' satisfaction and delight.

**Cultural Values and Norms**

Self-image, face perception, fear from people blames and generosity stimulate over-preparation and waste in social events. Our data also has demonstrated that food waste increases during special events such as the holy Ramadan Month.

**Ambient Co-eaters Characteristics**

Proving the modeling perspective that seeing co-eaters eat a lot will encourage one eats a lot too. Our analysis sheds some light on the effect of gender composition and group size. The more the group size, the more waste is achieved.

**Relationship Quality between Co-eaters**

It plays a vital role in maintaining food waste to a minimum. Indeed, it has been shown that individuals wish to avoid appearing being excessive eaters in front of strangers to make a positive impression.

**Estimation Inability**

Our analysis shows that the inability to estimate the food intake of individuals and/or the accurate number of invited people in social context is found to maximize food waste. Particularly, it is very difficult to estimate the number of diners in social events.
**Previous Experience**

Majority of the respondents declare that experience generated from evolution and learning over marriage years could help in estimating the right amounts for their family members. Previous experience plays a vital role in minimizing food waste in social contexts and contributes to solve the above-mentioned issue of estimation inability.

**Food Quality**

The importance of food quality as a dimension of service quality contributes to facilitate the minimization of waste. The amount of food waste was higher among people who were less satisfied by the food taste or by the portion size.

**Food Waste Beliefs**

For many of the participants, the desire to avoid wasting food for religious beliefs was viewed as a strong motivator to facilitate the minimization of waste. Our analysis also suggested the awareness of negative consequences of economic and social of food waste as other motivations to make respondents feel uncomfortable with wasting food.

**Statement of Key Contributions**

The current study makes several contributions to the existing literature of consumer psychology, sustainability, food waste behavior, and ethical consumption behavior. It adds to the social influence theory by investigating social meal concept in a broad perspective including all meals that are not eaten lonely in order to gain a holistic view of food waste in such contexts. Doing so reveals the variances among different social meal forms that lead to overconsumption and waste. Additionally, moving beyond the usual focus on the individual consumer level, this study revolves around a social phenomenon and, an individual in a collective manner as the unit of analysis. Furthermore, identifying people’s food waste minimization motivations and barriers
(whether goal-based, habitual or emotionally motivated) in social meal contexts is the first step to design effective interventions (Graham-Rowe et al., 2015). Fourth, this research contributes to the limited literature on the food waste issue in one of the developing countries in a North African metropolitan area; particularly most studies in food waste behavior have been conducted in developed countries. This helps us in identifying the cultural factors that affect food waste issue. In addition, it adds to ethical consumption behavior by proposing some interventions to reduce food waste in a social context. These interventions include:

**Awareness of waste consequences:** making the issue of food waste and its consequences more visible and noticeable.

**Paying for leftovers:** another suggestion was paying fines on leftovers when eating outside.

**Food waste recovery:** distributing leftovers to poor people was a suggestion to recover food waste from banquets. Leftovers from hotels, restaurants and weddings should be packaged and ordered in clean boxes and then distributed to charities up to date.

**Variety in portion size:** making changes in the portion size and meal size in restaurants to be suitable for different structure families.
Group Factors Affecting Consumers' Behavioral Intentions toward Suboptimal Food Products: Perspectives from Consumer Choice Theory and Theory of Planned Behavior

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This research is funded by National Natural Science Foundation of China (grant number: 71672063 and 72072065)

Keywords: Sustainability, Food waste, Suboptimal products, Consumer Choice theory, Theory of planned behavior, Pro-environmental behavior

Description: This paper attempts to offer a comprehensive framework for predicting consumers' behavioral intentions toward suboptimal food products.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Food waste research concerning suboptimal food products has focused on identifying the interventions that encourage consumers to purchase such products. Two main
approaches have been addressed to tackle the problem of rejecting suboptimal food production; positively framing its unusual cosmetic appearance and/or noticeably decreasing the selling price (Grewal et al., 2019). Previous research has focused on price reduction as a means to encourage consumers to engage in suboptimal food consumption (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2018). In addition, previous research on customer motivations to purchase suboptimal food products has mentioned non-price interventions (e.g., promoting it with a clear message against food waste, or in an emotional matter as the ‘loveable underdogs’) to encourage consumers to buy such products (Makhal et al., 2020). However, the majority of such interventions have been investigated without a clear theoretical basis. Well-grounded theoretical frameworks for consumers’ suboptimal food consumption are rare. It has been contended that examining the determinants of possibly modifiable behaviors should be theory-driven, because theory can offer a framework from which causal relationships can be determined and thus it can guide the process of developing effective interventions (Schmidt, 2019; Steg & Vlek, 2009). Therefore, this paper endeavors to predict consumers’ behavioral intentions toward suboptimal food products, grounded into theoretical lens; based on consumer choice theory and theory of planned behavior. Accordingly, the main research question of this paper is "what are the group factors that affect consumers’ behavioral intentions toward suboptimal food products?". In more detail, (1) what are the effects of economic-based factors, environmental-based factors, health-based factors, status-signaling factors, perceived value and risk perception dimensions on consumers’ behavioral intentions toward such products?, and (2) does attitude plays a mediating role in the previous relationships?
Key contributions

This paper extends food waste research, ethical consumption behavior, suboptimal food products, theory of planned behavior, and pro-environmental behavior by enhancing our understanding of consumer behaviors in the area of suboptimal food consumption. It offers a comprehensive framework shedding some light on profiling who suboptimal food consumers are, as well as what motivates or demotivates consumers to purchase or recommend suboptimal food products. It employs consumer choice theory with theory of planned behavior to extend our understanding regarding suboptimal food consumption behaviors. It attempts to delve into more detail to capture a full picture of the factors affecting behavioral intentions toward suboptimal food products by taking into account group factors consisting of economic, environmental, heath, value, risk, and status-signaling related factors. The findings of this study might give benefit actions to retailers and policy makers to reduce food waste behavior through increasing consumers' acceptance of suboptimal products. It is also expected to offer recommendations regarding market segmentation that retailers should utilize in targeting consumers with personalized offerings to promote suboptimal products. It is also expected to give retailers more recommendation about suitable pricing strategies that should enhance consumers' attitudes towards such products.
Helping others helps me: The impact of disaster response on military veteran well-being.

Introduction

The role of veteran service organizations (VSOs) is to help address veteran well-being concerns by offering a variety of programs to provide opportunities to improve military veteran well-being. Despite the Department of Veterans Affairs budget of $217 billion, without the support of non-profit VSOs and other similar organizations, the ability to improve the lives of this group is limited (Adler et al. 2011).

Measuring program success for VSO initiatives is critical to ensuring optimal programmatic development and the ability to attract funds from donors over time. The demonstration of program success allows organizations to retain and engage members, as well as attract new ones. Team Rubicon (TR), an international disaster and emergency response organization, utilizes the unique skill sets and experiences of military veterans and civilian first responders, and bridges the gap between veterans and non-veterans with a focus on deploying both kinds of members on disaster response operations (e.g. wildfires, hurricanes, etc.). Their mission is two-fold: to provide disaster relief and to help veterans transition from military to civilian life by offering its veteran members the sense of community and purpose they lose when leaving the military (Kranke et al. 2017). Although it has be suggested that exposing veterans to such disaster situations may erode resilience and well-being (Zagelbaum et al. 2014), growing body of evidence shows that such programs benefit veterans via exposure to difficult situations without the dangerous aspects of war (Der-Martirosian et al. 2019; Kranke et al. 2017), which is consistent with the Therapeutic Spiral Model (Hudgins 2002), and Emotion focused therapy (Paivio and Nieuwenhuis 2001). Noteworthy, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) currently advises those who are interested in volunteering to join volunteer organizations, such as Team Rubicon, in order to avoid the problem of limited training and experience that is common among spontaneous volunteers, as veterans are better prepared for disasters relative to civilians (Der-Martirosian et al. 2014).

To guide our research, we hypothesize that participation in disaster response operations favorably impacts veteran resilience. The Connor-Davidson Resilience scale (Campbell-Sills and Stein 2007) was used to measure the key construct of interest in the studies. To our knowledge, this is the first study that tests this hypothesis with a large comprehensive sample of disaster volunteers, consisting of veterans and civilians.

Study 1

Study 1 was conducted using a 2018 survey data of TR members who deployed in disaster response operations with TR over a twelve-month period. The study 1 sample consisted of TR members (veterans and civilians, n=1891) and mTurk External Sample of veterans (n=233).

Study 1 results showed that veterans who deployed with TR reported significantly higher resilience as compared to those who did not deploy with TR. Compared to civilian members, resilience for veterans who deploy is not significantly different (MResilience-Civilians=34.12), p>.05. However, the mean resilience for veterans who did not deploy is significantly lower than mean resilience for civilian members (p=.001). Combined, this evidence is promising in that deployments with TR appear to have a differential and favorable impact on veterans.

Results also showed that resilience for veterans who reported disability or trauma differed
significantly based on their deployment status with TR, with those deploying having higher resilience scores. Thus, the favorable impact of deployment on veterans appears to be driven by those who have suffered disability or trauma. This provides strong evidence that TR deployment help those veterans most in need.

Considering just those veterans who reported suffering from PTSD, resilience is significantly higher for those who reported deploying with TR compared to those who stated they have not deployed with TR. This particular finding speaks against the suggestion that deployments in disaster recovery missions could serve as a PTSD trigger. It is also important to point out that relative to an external mTurk sample, TR veterans (both those who suffer from disability or trauma and those who do not) score significantly higher on resilience.

**Study 2**

Study 2 investigated the change in resilience by comparing a new member’s reported resilience upon joining TR and comparing that to their resilience score after their first deployment with TR. The matched sample for this analysis included members who completed an intake survey upon joining TR and a post deployment survey after participating in a disaster response mission (veterans n=54 and civilians n=25). It is important to point out that study 2 is ongoing, and more data is being collected.

If a member was deployed multiple times during the year, only their first deployment responses were used in the comparison. Although the data is being collected and the results are preliminary, Resilience prior to deployment was significantly lower relative to post-deployment. The differences were significant for both civilians and veterans.
References


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HOW TO BUILD A STRONG BRAND RELATIONSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS: EVIDENCE FROM A LARGE-SCALE FIELD EXPERIMENT AND SURVEY

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Keywords: sustainability, customer behavior, customer brand relationship, value congruity

Description: Based on a field experiment combined with a customer survey, we investigate the effect of different sustainability domains on customer brand relationship while analyzing underlying mechanisms of value (in)congruity.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Under the name of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), society has made progress in addressing one of the world’s pressing challenges. Climate change, excessive personal consumption behaviors and industrial pollution are affecting our environment dramatically. The global fashion industry still produces around 2.1 billion tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions in 2018, being 4% of the global total (Berg et al. 2020). The impact on the environment is only one issue in this industry. Unethical working conditions with poor working wages and unfair labour rights are still widely present as well (Turker and Altuntas 2014). While customers are more and more engaged in sustainability, marketeers still struggle to figure out how to communicate CSR activities like sustainable products and how to maximize customer demands and build a strong brand relationship on top of it (Wang, Gibson, and Zander 2020). Thus, this study aims to explore the following research question: What impact have sustainable products on customer brand relationship, namely brand identification, loyalty, and advocacy? To analyze the underlying mechanisms, we extend this research question by: What impact does value congruity have on this customer brand relationship?

Method and Data

We test our hypotheses based on a unique dataset obtained from a large-scale online field experiment in combination with a customer survey. The field experiment is conducted as a multi-variant test in August and September 2020 with a German online brand for sustainable products. The research setting allows for observing actual customer reactions. We combined this field experiment, observing more than 250,000 users, with an after sale survey of more than 9,900 responses. We are able to analyze the effects of the different sustainability domains (social vs.
environmental sustainability vs. a combination of both) on customer brand relationship, a well researched construct combining brand identification, loyalty and advocacy (Du, Bhattacharya, and Sen 2007).

Moreover, we investigate how value (in)congruity impacts customer brand relationship. To analyze whether one can generate a stronger brand relationship based on value congruity, we incorporate customer values in our research model. Based on Steg, Dreijerink, and Abrahamse (2005) and van Doorn and Verhoef (2015), we assess the following values: egoistic, altruistic, biospheric. In a second step, we identify for each sustainability domain the respective values to determine the variables value congruity and value incongruity following Tuškej, Golob, and Podnar (2013). We use linear regression models.

**Summary of Findings**

In a first step, we analyze the effects of different sustainability domains on customer brand relationship. Our findings indicate a positive significant impact of environmental sustainability. In a second step, we investigate the impact of (in)value congruity on customer brand relationship.

For environmental sustainability we find a positive significant effect in combination with high values of biospheric, altruistic, and egoistic. A combination with high biospheric values indicates mostly a high or even the highest coefficient compared to the other incongruity combinations. Social sustainability generates in combination with the congruent value altruistic a significant positive effect on customer brand relationship, in regard to loyalty and advocacy. We identify significant positive effects for value incongruity combinations for social sustainability and high biospheric values on brand identification and high egoistic values on loyalty. Lastly, social and environmental sustainability in combination with both high biospheric and altruistic values
generates a positive significant effect on brand identification and advocacy, while for loyalty we only see a positive significant effect in combination with high altruistic values. Summarizing, environmental sustainability indicates across all value combinations positive impacts. The combination of sustainability domains indicates higher coefficients than coefficients for just environmental sustainability in regard to high altruistic values.

Key Contribution
This study examines the relationship between sustainable products differentiated in their different domains and customer brand relationship. By combining an online field experiment with a survey we investigate the underlying reasons for the relationship and disentangle the effects of value (in)congruity. We contribute to recent literature twofold addressing both sustainability as well as branding literature. First, following previous findings that CSR activities in general lead to different customer reactions (Du, Bhattacharya, and Sen 2007), we go one step further and investigate distinctively different sustainability domains. We reveal that only environmental – and not social – sustainability positively impacts customer brand relationship. Second, following branding literature cue consistency and thus consistent values between customers and brands lead to a strong brand relationship. Our findings add the sustainability perspective and indicate that also seemingly inconsistent values in combination with environmental sustainability have a positive impact. As environmentalism is more and more present in today’s life, customers with high egoism values may positively respond to sustainable products due to a personal warm glow effect, meaning they derive positive feelings from environmentally-sustainable products (Andreoni 1989; Habel et al. 2016). We derive that environmentally-sustainable products can be targeted broadly, while social sustainability rather addresses a niche market.
References are available upon request.
INDIVIDUALISM AND COLLECTIVISM AS MODERATORS OF THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NORMS AND PRO-ENVIRONMENTAL CONSUMER
BEHAVIOR

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Keywords: pro-environmental behavior, injunctive norms, descriptive norms, culture, self-construal.

Description: This paper explores the moderating role of culture and self-construal on the
effect of social norms on pro-environmental consumer behavior.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

What is the effect of individualism and collectivism on a macro (culture) and micro (self-construal) level on the relationship between social norms (injunctive and descriptive) and pro-environmental consumer behavior?

Method and Data

A total of 524 respondents from the US (45.4% male, Mage=40.30, SD=12.695) and 533 respondents from China (56.5% male, Mage=32.82, SD=14.058) participated in the online survey. In a between-subjects design, the participants were randomly assigned to one of five conditions (control vs. independent/interdependent self-construal x injunctive/descriptive social norms). The survey consisted of a number of questions addressing the attitudes and
beliefs of respondents towards plastic waste reduction through reusable (shopping) bags. We conducted a Factorial ANCOVA analysis to test the moderating role of culture and self-construal on pro-environmental consumer behavior, while controlling for consumer preferences for environmentally friendly products.

**Summary of Findings**

Although the directionality of the effect indicates that social norms are a stronger motivator of pro-environmental behavior in collectivistic than in individualistic cultures, we do not find significant support for this effect. In terms of the moderating effects of self-construal, we conclude that injunctive social norms are a stronger motivator of pro-environmental consumer behavior when the independent self is activated, while descriptive norms are a stronger motivator of pro-environmental actions when the interdependent level of the self is activated. Looking at the combined moderating effects of culture and self-construal in the norm-sustainability relationship, we conclude that irrespective of the activated level of the self, social norms are a stronger motivator of pro-environmental behavior in collectivistic than in individualistic cultures. Interestingly, while we confirm that people in individualistic cultures are more inclined to activate the independent self, we conclude that both self-construal levels (i.e., independent and interdependent) are important in collectivistic cultures.

**Key Contributions**

Our findings demonstrate how culture and self-construal, separately and in combination, can strengthen the effect of social norms on pro-environmental behavioral intentions. We contribute to existing research on the relationship between social norms and pro-environmental behavior by highlighting the importance of both independent and interdependent self-construal in collectivistic cultures. Furthermore, depending on the activated level of the self, we identify the important influence of injunctive norms in both individualistic and collectivistic cultures.
IS MORE ALWAYS BETTER?

PRODUCT AVAILABILITY, CONSUMPTION AND MARKETING INFLUENCES

AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PYRAMID

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Keywords:
Bottom of the Pyramid, Consumption, Consumer Behavior, Marketing actions, Low income consumers

Description:
We empirically study consumer behavior of the BoP population and examine how it is shaped by marketing actions and messages, through field-level data collection.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question
In extant literature, there is a clear gap regarding the impact of marketing actions on BoP consumption behavior, and existing studies either provide anecdotal evidence (Prahalad, 2004) or are conceptual in nature (Davidson, 2009; Karnani, 2007). Further, a few empirical studies that exist have adopted exploratory and qualitative approaches to examine how marketing affects consumption behavior (Jaiswal and Gupta 2015). There is scant quantitative research on what products are offered at the BoP, what products are consumed, the factors driving this consumption, and the impact of marketing activities and consumption on the lives of the BoP (Dembek et al., 2020). The present study is thus an attempt to examine consumer behavior in a BoP sample through fieldwork from India. We empirically study consumer behavior of the BoP population and examine how it is shaped by marketing actions and messages through field-level data collection. We use both quantitative as well as qualitative approaches to study consumption and its impact on the poor. In the same study, we examine the supply-side aspects related to access and product availability and the demand-side aspects related to the buying behavior.

Method and Data
Following a month-long period of observations and sample selection, we constructed a roster of all the products available (216 products) at the retail store, followed by data collection on store-level purchases of the 21-household sample for 5 days and for 99 individuals. This roster was dissected along several dimensions and was used for constructing household level store-based consumption profile along with data on store-level purchases collected later. For the available food products, a Nutrient Profile was constructed using label information and data
from the Indian Food Composition Tables (National Institute of Nutrition, 2017) for calorie, carbohydrate, protein, fiber, and fat content. We also recorded what was purchased from the store, by which member of the household, belonging to which household, and at what time of the day. This was compiled with product roster to generate a dataset showing consumption from the store for every household. In addition, we conducted five in-depth interviews using a snowball sampling approach, followed by two FGDs with randomly selected members from different households- male and female adults to understand their experiences as consumers. We also conducted ten judgment-based spot interviews at the point of purchase to understand why a certain product was being purchased, who initiated the purchase, what was its use or expected benefit.

**Summary of Findings**

Our results show that out of the available choices before consumers, the majority were nonessentials. Further, out of total purchases made, consumers were purchasing more nonessentials than essentials. We also found that higher budget spending may not necessarily mean more consumption of essentials. It might be owing to higher costs of essentials as compared to non-essentials. Also, exposure to advertisements using celebrity appeals, availability of lower entry prices and small pack sizes, point of purchase displays, and strong distribution and easy availability were found to influence buying behavior, product recall, and preference for brands and promoted the consumption of non-essentials. Within non-essentials, sizeable spending on tobacco, beedi, cigarettes, and pan masala has been described as a big strain on the limited means available before these households, and these being unwholesome goods, is a social and health welfare challenge. Also, energy-rich diets containing a higher amount of sugar or salt, low on dietary fiber and carbohydrates were consumed, along with high-calorie consumption and alcohol and tobacco use, which are primary reasons for the
increasing prevalence of disorders like heart diseases, under and over nourishment, hypertension, and diabetes (NIN, 2011). On the supply side, non-essentials were, on an average, cheaper than essential commodities, had lower entry prices, and were heavily promoted, all of which have implications for consumer welfare, especially for vulnerable consumer groups like the BoP who have limited market interactions, low levels of literacy and higher sociopsychological pressures within impoverished social networks (Chakravarti, 2006).

**Key Contributions**

There is a need for a more nuanced understanding of BoP consumers and the impact of marketing actions and consumption on their wellbeing (Martin and Hill, 2012). Existing studies either provide anecdotal evidence (Prahalad, 2004) or are conceptual in nature (Davidson, 2009). Further, it is important to know how individual characteristics of consumers and their local market and socio-cultural contexts influence consumption (Ramani et al., 2012; Howell et al., 2019). In this work, we study consumer behavior of the BoP population and how it is shaped by marketing actions and messages through field-level data collection. From a managerial standpoint, we find that simply increasing access may not necessarily imply welfare or better purchases being made at the BoP marketplace. Also, while marketing nonessential goods shift purchase behavior towards a non-optimal allocation of limited monetary resources available at the BoP, but if made available at comparable prices, consumers may be willing to switch from non-essentials to essential commodities. From a policy point of view, our study points towards the need to reassess what is available at the BoP and how this segment allocates budget, especially to non-wholesome commodities like tobacco and sugary and salty food products which contribute to malnourishment (NIN, 2011).

*References are available upon request.*
NEOTENY AND DECISION MAKING OF VOTERS IN INDIA

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Keywords: Neoteny, Voters, Political Marketing, Decision-making, India

Description: Neotenic characteristics of political candidates affect the voting preferences of voters.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Neotenic characteristics have been less explored by researchers to explain the decision making of voters. The importance of voting is well accepted and this research would help different stakeholders in understanding the process and taking appropriate action. The idea is to take informed decisions by voters and avoid getting into the traps of any misleading appearances and
information. The research would be helpful in making an awareness strategy for the voters about the potential impact of Neoteny in their decision making.

**Summary of Findings**

Decision about the candidates is one of the most important activities in politics. Politicians try to lure the voters through various techniques. Neoteny could be one of potential reasons behind choosing a candidate. Voters may get fooled by Neotenous characteristics of the politicians and may choose them based on these characteristics rather than real offering of the candidates based on ideology. We have seen how politicians try to look and act younger than their actual age. The paper would try to get the view of young voters in terms of their understanding about facial appearance and its impact on their decision making about the candidates. It becomes more important in a democratic country like India, where many of the politicians do not act the way they should be. The potential benefit would be in terms of using this research in making an awareness strategy for the voters about the potential impact of Neoteny in their decision making. We will be exploring how physical appearance is being used to signal something to the voters. In other words, attempts would be made to understand how voters are interpreting the signals of Neoteny and deciding about the candidates.

Candidates are creating their personal brands (brandidates) using strategies like creating messages in interactive, humanize politics by using personal narratives and perform emotional labor to meet the affective needs of voter-consumers.
Key Contributions

Ideally physical appearance should matter less, given the world we are in when information about any individual is available at the fingertips of voters. The information about their social behavior, engagement in criminal activity, corruption, and ideology is available in the public domain. Still, results of the elections are not in congruence with this information.

Neotenous characteristics like looking young and attractive may signal quality in the mind of voters. It is also associated with a variety of positive personality attributions. Across culture, there is agreement among voters about the traits they infer from faces of political candidates. So, given the diversity of culture within India, it is expected to give similar results.

It has been found in other contexts that attractive individuals are more likely to be hired for jobs given other things remain the same. Voters may not be aware about these inherent biases and judgments would be involuntary, unconscious and very quickly. Our attempt would be to find out the facial cues which matter most for voters’ perceptions of politicians and these cues are utilized within the political decision-making process. In addition, we will explore the impact of gender stereotypes in perception of politician appearance and ultimately decision making on voting.

“References are available upon request.”
PLAYING WITH POLITICS - THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CEO NARCISSISM AND FIRM LOBBYING ACTIVITIES

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Keywords: CEO Narcissism, Personality Psychology, Firm Lobbying, Non-market Strategy, Computer-Aided Text Analysis

Description: In this study, we investigate the impact of CEO narcissism on a firm’s non-market strategy of corporate lobbying by analyzing a CEO and lobbying data sample of companies listed in the S&P 500 index between 2005 and 2017.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

In 2019, U.S companies spent almost $3.5 billion on lobbying (Statista 2021). Corporate lobbying aims at influencing legislators and regulators to encourage favorable policies and regulatory frameworks (Chen, Parsley, and Yang 2015). Yet, the needs of the firm are not the only reason why a company might engage in lobbying. Strategic decisions like corporate lobbying are in part a reflection of executive characteristics (Hambrick and Mason 1984) and over time, not only observable characteristics but also executive personalities have received attention from scholars. Already Miller and Toulouse (1986) showed that CEO personality significantly impacts firm strategy. One CEO personality trait, that has received considerable attention is narcissism. Multiple studies have investigated its impact on external outcomes like performance (Chatterjee and...
Hambrick 2011, 2007), yet how narcissistic CEOs position their firm in the political arena remains unexplored (Cragun, Olsen, and Wright 2019).

Drawing from psychology research on CEO narcissism (Chatterjee and Hambrick 2007; Rosenthal and Pittinsky 2006), this study addresses the following research questions: (1) How does CEO narcissism impact a firm’s lobbying behavior? (2) How is this relationship moderated by past performance?

**Method and Data**

Our sample is based on 800 companies listed in the S&P 500 index between 2007 and 2017. General and financial firm information was obtained from Compustat, while executive data was hand-collected from 10-Ks and proxy statements.

Our dependent variable *firm lobbying* is based on corporate lobbying data including lobbying expenses and the number of lobbyists employed, collected by the Center for Responsive Politics (CRP). This measure based on lobbying amounts reported by organizations as total lobbying expenses for a period has already been used in previous research (Chen, Parsley, and Yang 2015).

Our independent variable *CEO narcissism* is derived using speech and rhetoric as a proxy for CEO personality (Boyd and Pennebaker 2017). We collected earnings call transcripts from Refinitiv Eikon and isolated the CEOs as sole speakers. Based on these speech samples, we employed a computer-aided text analysis using the CAT scanner software (McKenny, Short, and Newman 2012) and the narcissistic rhetoric dictionary created by Anglin et al. (2018).
**Summary of Findings**

Up until this point, only preliminary results are available for our study. However, these results indicate support our hypotheses. First regression results show CEO narcissism having a positive effect on a firm’s lobbying expenses and the number of lobbyists employed.

**Statement of Key Contributions**

While upper echelons perspective has established that observable characteristics influence executive decision-making (Hambrick 2007; Hambrick and Mason 1984), research has only recently started to consider personality constructs like narcissism (Chatterjee and Hambrick 2011, 2007). In CEO narcissism research, most studies have investigated performance metrics such as innovation and financial performance and have largely ignored non-performance outcomes (Cragun, Olsen, and Wright 2019). One critically perceived yet widely used non-performance outcome is corporate lobbying.

Our contribution is three-fold. First, we extend research on lobbying by introducing CEO narcissism as an antecedent. Firms place high hopes in lobbying, yet literature remains unclear if the outcomes are worth the cost. We offer CEO narcissism as one potential explanation and argue that narcissistic CEOs use lobbying to satisfy their egos.

Second, we contribute to CEO narcissism literature by answering the research call by Cragun et al. (2019) to investigate non-performance outcomes of CEO narcissism. With corporate lobbying, we introduce non-market strategies with potentially significant implications on organizational outcomes to CEO narcissism research.

Finally, as a managerial contribution, we enable firms, boards, and other stakeholders to better understand the impacts of CEO narcissism on firm involvement in corporate lobbying.

**References are available upon request**
PRESCRIBED MEDICATION CONSUMPTION FOR CHRONIC ILLNESS: AN UNFOLDING, NARRATIVE, EXPERIENCE PERSPECTIVE

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Keywords: long-term adherence, chronic illness, experience-centered, narrative approach

Description: Our study uses an extended, narrative, and experience-based approach to reveal four distinct patterns of prolonged medication consumption among chronically ill persons, along with individual and social elements that shape consumption in the context of time.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Medication taking as prescribed, a critical consumption behavior known as adherence, is a major challenge for chronically ill individuals. Knowledge on this difficult but vital form of consumption is limited because marketing studies illuminate episodic health behaviors such as choice of breast cancer therapies rather than quotidian acts to manage life-long illnesses. To understand chronic illness medication adherence, we take an unfolding, experience-centered, narrative approach to its study. This approach affords a long-term patient view anchored in daily circumstances, and permits tracing occurrences and changes in adherence efforts in temporal order. We address three questions: what are narrative arcs, or sequences of medication taking experiences, over spans of one to many years? How are arcs patterned yet distinct across persons suffering from chronic illness? In what ways are arcs shaped by individual and social elements in relation to time?

Method and Data

We applied Gergen and Gergen’s concept of narrative forms (1983) to identify patterns of medication consumption among adults with hypertension by analyzing personal retrospective accounts from illness diagnosis to the present. Narratives occur in three forms, each reflecting a stance towards the adherence goal: progressive (movement towards), regressive (movement away), and stable (no movement). Given the theory’s emphasis on the outside world knitted into the fabric of personal lives, we also attended to social and individual influences on medication taking to understand why narrative patterns occur.
The method is secondary qualitative analysis, or examining already collected qualitative data to pursue additional questions to, and/or apply a distinct theoretical lens from, the primary analysis (Heaton 2008, Hinds et al. 1997). The data set consists of 30- to 90-minute semi-structured interviews with 30 informants afflicted with chronic hypertension and prescribed at least one medication for hypertension as recently as a year prior or far back as over 40 years. A hermeneutical analysis was done on the interviews, moving iteratively back and forth between the data and emerging insights (Thompson 1997). Gergen and Gergen’s narrative concepts were applied to discrete movements and shifts in medication adherence over time.

**Summer of Findings**

The analysis revealed long-term adherence experiences patterned into four narrative arcs: Out of the Gate, Existential Turn, Fits and Starts, and Slow Climb. Each arc contains a sequence of one or more progressive, regressive, or stable periods that together distinguish the nature and directionality of medication taking over several years. Periods are accompanied by individual and social elements shaping consumption. In the Out of the Gate arc, a progressive narrative is followed quickly by a stable story, as individuals strive to adhere from the outset to avoid death or a life-altering disability. In the Existential Turn, the arc is initially regressive, or failing to adhere, followed by two progressive movements. The shift from regressive to progressive is triggered by an existential crisis such as nearly dying, while the second progressive period is propelled by a higher health goal. In Fits and Starts individuals cycle repeatedly between regressive and progressive movements. Momentary mortality fears are replaced by decisions to live and let live. In the Slow Climb, the regressive movement characterizes nearly the entire course of the disease—some as long as thirty years—before shifting to the progressive form much later in life, as prompted by aging.

**Key Contributions**

For the marketing scholars, we contribute new insights on a challenging but critical health consumption behavior over extended durations, namely taking prescribed medications for chronic illnesses. Specifically, we contribute a new framework of four distinct narrative arcs, which describe how difficult consumption is to sustain and its evolution over time. We also discover several individual and social influences on these complex paths. For health marketers, the framework, as well as discovered individual and social influences, can be applied to develop effective promotions and communications targeted to encourage consistent and correct medication consumption. For example, advertising can be created for persons on different paths, incorporating positive individual and social supports into those messages. For health providers, we contribute practices that may increase adherence to save or improve patients’ lives. The framework may be used by health providers to diagnose which path an individual is following, where in that trajectory s/he is, and what susceptibilities or negative influences may threaten adherence. Courses of action can then be advised to patients to avert non-adherence or move towards greater adherence.
RETAIL GASOLINE PRICE COMPETITION UNDER CARBON TAX

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Keywords: carbon tax, gasoline, price competition, price strategy

Description: This research explores the impact of a carbon tax on price competition in the retail gasoline market

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Amid significant opposition, but in line with its plan for a greener future, the federal government of Canada imposed a carbon tax on gasoline in Ontario on April 1st 2019. The carbon tax’s impacts on consumer surplus and gasoline businesses are controversial, as how it affects retail price competition is not clear. The tax imposition raises costs for retailers and compels them to pass on higher prices to consumers. Consumers, consequently, adjust their price search behaviors. The resulting retail prices are determined by strategic play by both competing gas stations and consumers. In this study, we focus on how heterogeneous sellers adjust pricing strategies under tax imposition and how tax reshapes competition among retailers. More specifically, we investigate the impact of the carbon tax on gas station pricing by observing its moderating effects on essential factors that shape gas stations’ pricing strategies such as (i) intensity of competition, (ii) the type of consumer, (iii) brand affiliation, and (iv) station location.
Method and Data

The data for this study comes from 79 gas stations in the city of Hamilton in Ontario, Canada. We used 16 weeks of data, eight weeks before and after the tax imposition, to understand the impact of policy change. Starting February 2019, price data for regular-grade gasoline was collected hourly at each of the gas stations in our sample. This was combined with demographic data from Statistics Canada to yield a rich data set. Furthermore, we collected daily wholesale gasoline prices supplied at Hamilton. The resulting data set can be analyzed using panel data methods. The Hausman test result of the panel data was significant at the 5% level, suggesting the fixed effect model should be used for analysis. Some measures of retail competition, such as location, brand, competitive intensity, etc., are time-invariant, and their effects on the retail gasoline price cannot be estimated separately. However, their impacts on the gas stations’ response to the carbon tax are measurable in the fixed-effect model through the interaction of the tax indicator variable with time-invariant characteristics.

Summary of Findings

Our study shows that after the imposition of the tax, the average gasoline price rises, and the price dispersion among gas stations becomes lower. It implies that gas stations compete more intensively in price. Moreover, the ability of gas stations to raise prices after the tax imposition is negatively correlated to the number of their local competitors. Furthermore, the carbon tax affects disadvantaged consumers disproportionately. Consumers in areas with higher household incomes incur a smaller increase in prices post-tax than those residing in lower household incomes. It suggests that the 4-cents-per-liter carbon tax significantly stimulated the consumer search activities in the high-income area and restrained gas stations’ ability to raise prices. Our findings suggest that branded chain stations pass on a lower tax burden to consumers compared
to independent gas stations. We also observe that stations located along highways have a higher ability to pass on burden of tax to consumers, compared to those in other locations.

**Key Contributions**

Our research offers a new perspective to investigate the impacts of specific taxes. Although the carbon tax applies to all retailers and consumers equally, retailers respond differently, and consumers take uneven tax burdens due to the reaction of market competition. The empirical findings suggest that the carbon tax brought additional disadvantages to weak agents — lower-income consumers and independent gas stations who are not affiliated with larger branded chains — in the market.

Marketing practitioners and policymakers can benefit from this research. With growing concern around the environment, an increasing amount of policy instruments such as carbon taxes are expected to be adopted. This study showcases how these policies reshape competition among retailers. It inspires retailers how to adjust pricing strategies under such policies according to local competition and retailer characteristics, and can help policymakers better anticipate the consequences of similar policies in retail markets.

References are available upon request
STRATEGY FORMULATION FOR CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: TOWARDS A DECISION-MAKING MODEL USING FUZZY APPROACH

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Keywords: Corporate social responsibility, sustainable development goals, multi-criteria decision-making approach, strategy formulation, fuzzy logic

Description: The research attempts to propose a methodology toward CSR strategy formulation for competitive advantage by empirically analysing perceptions about CSR benefits of important stakeholders in a multi-criteria decision-making approach

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

With the rise in environmental consciousness and calls for sustainable development, organisations have realised the scope of considering corporate social responsibility (CSR) as a strategic differentiator to achieving economic goals and competitive advantage (Benitez et al., 2020; Asmussen & Fosfuri, 2019; Yu et al., 2017; Yadav et al., 2017; Carroll et al., 2016). Extant research established that quality of CSR stratagem significantly contributes to an organisation's competitiveness in many ways. To survive and thrive in a competitive world, organisations require support from all stakeholders who should trust in the social commitment of the firm enunciated through CSR initiatives. Therefore, designing impactful CSR programs and executing them in a manner appealing to all stakeholders becomes an integral element of strategy formulation.

Decisions on CSR activities has remained as the prerogative of top management and policymakers; however, decisions on CSR strategy in consultation with major stakeholders (Kim et al., 2018; Bhattacharya et al., 2009) is more impactful. The plethora of CSR research investigates either the customers' perception or the employee perception concerning the impact of CSR to firm's competitiveness. An effective CSR strategy formulation involves considering the plethora of attributes, and therefore choosing the right ones can be challenging and complex. Thus, there emanates a need for the development of a robust methodology that incorporates views of multiple critical stakeholders considering the multiple attributes. Therefore, this study attempts to propose a methodology toward CSR strategy formulation for competitive advantage by empirically analysing perceptions about CSR benefits of important stakeholders in an MCDM approach.

Research Objective

1. To propose a methodology for developing a decision-making model for CSR strategy formulation incorporating stakeholder perceptions using the Fuzzy multi-criteria decision-making approach.

2. To examine the differences in the perceptions of customers and employees regarding the importance and impact of identified CSR actions in developing a competitive advantage.
Method and Data

The proposed decision-making methodology comprising of five steps- (1) building evaluation model, (2) data collection, (3) information processing, (4) performance score computation, and (5) development of a strategy matrix for facilitating decision making. The current study demonstrates the steps using the banking context. Banks act as an engine of economic development by diligently assisting the financial requirements of individuals and industries for engaging in activities that create value. They are endowed with the opportunity to frame policies for creating a sustainable society by making capital readily available for pro-environmental production and consumption. The CSR orientation of banks can be reflected in their funding policies to public and private borrowers favouring development projects. One of the standard policies aligned to CSR adopted by banks pertains to relaxed norms for lending to priority sectors like agriculture, small scale, and ancillary industries, new and renewable sources of energy, cottage industries, artisans, education and housing for weaker communities. Similarly, banks actively participate in numerous activities supporting environmental protection, community development, women empowerment, education, skill development, agricultural support, financial inclusion, and healthcare management.

Based on the various activities, the evaluation model for CSR strategy formulation in banking considered three dimensions of CSR, namely, economic, social, and environmental as major enablers that develop positive perceptions among stakeholders from CSR focus. After critical scrutiny of the seventeen SDGs by a team of ten CSR policymakers in banks, we were able to shortlist thirteen criteria for deciding on CSR focus for higher impact on the bank's competitiveness. The second level of the hierarchical model comprised of the criteria classified across three enablers. The same expert panel helped to identify different CSR activities pertaining to each criterion that can contribute positively to the bank's image. The evaluation model included a total of sixty-four CSR across thirteen different criteria.

This study used primary data for the comparative assessment of CSR performance variables. We used internal stakeholders (bank employees) and external stakeholders (bank customers) as evaluators to assess the CSR activities. The fuzzy approach is an expert evaluation process and only requires views of a limited number of experts (e.g., Sohaib et al., 2019; Ko, 2015; Moreno et al., 2010); hence we selected fifty senior banking professionals with relevant experience in the planning and implementation of CSR programs of banks and fifty customers who regularly monitor CSR initiatives of banks to offer their judgments about the variables.

Summary of Findings

To facilitate comparisons, though we had assumed that a 3 (unimportant, moderate important, important) x 3 (poor impact, fair impact, good impact) classification is beneficial for strategy formulation. In the studies context, none of the actions was evaluated as unimportant with poor impact; we thus developed a 2 (moderate important, important) x 2 (fair impact, good impact) classification. The values ranging from 'unimportant' to 'important' formed one group, 'important' to 'very important' formed the second group. Similarly, in impact assessments, 'poor impact' to 'good impact' formed one group and 'good impact' to 'very good impact' formed the second group.

From the results, we found that none of the stakeholders viewed any criteria or activities considered for mapping perceptions about CSR as unimportant or non-impactful, confirming
the content validity of CSR activities identified by the expert team. In general, both employees and customers believe that CSR contributes to bank’s image, but the findings of the study clearly identify the areas of difference in the perceptions of bank employees and customers concerning the contribution of CSR. The employees had higher levels of belief in strategic benefits from CSR compared to customers.

**Key Contributions**

This paper focuses on the vital role of stakeholders in the evaluation of CSR activities. Additionally, the limitations in the expertise of stakeholder members in offering valid judgments about the assessment might challenge the robustness of many such attempts. A significant contribution of this attempt was that the evaluation model demonstrated is comprehensive and captures most of the relevant development goals related to sustainability. The exploration of areas of parity and conflict between customers and employees helps understand stakeholder level priorities about SDGs in general. Another noteworthy aspect of the methodology developed is that it is possible to extend the same to any number of stakeholder groups or industry segments. The research thus provides both academic and practical insights in developing CSR as a strategic impetus for achieving manifold benefits to firms.

References will be provided upon request.
SYSTEMATIC AND ETHICAL APPROACH TO FOOD EXPERIENCE DESIGN

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**Keywords:** ethical principles, food experience, food design, food well-being, ethical food experience design

**Description:** This paper introduces a novel and comprehensive theoretical framework, the Systemic Ethical Food Experience Design (SEFED), that aims to improve innovation of food experiences contributing to food well-being
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Although traditional approaches to food design, the processes of innovation related to food (Zampollo 2016), are developed with the best intentions in mind, they often suffer from unintended consequences. For example, the UK’s “Eat Out to Help Out” scheme, a governmental response to the COVID-19 pandemic, subsidized 50% of the cost of food and nonalcoholic drinks at participating restaurants to encourage people to eat out as a way to protect jobs. The scheme stimulated demand; however, it also unintentionally led to loss of human life (i.e., contributed to the second wave of the novel coronavirus; Fetzer 2020), benefited only middle- and higher-income households (Resolution Foundation 2020), led to a higher level of hostility toward staff due to long queues that threatened service standards (O’Shea 2020), and was criticized for its potential connection with obesity (Dean 2020).

We argue that unintended negative consequences of food design originate from mainly two issues that relate to how to design: endemic view of the innovation process and the economic decision-making process. In order to remedy the shortcomings in the food innovation process, we propose a novel conceptual theoretical framework: Systemic Ethical Food Experience Design (SEFED).

Theoretical Model

SEFED adopts a systemic (vs. endemic) and an ethical (vs. economic) approach to decision making process. The systemic approach extends the innovation to include all actors who participate in the ecosystem and to integrate their resources (Vargo and Lusch 2011) into the development of customer-centric experiences (Zomerdijk and Voss 2010). Systematic approach highlights that food design should be the responsibility and the output of the whole collective.
With the range of actors involved extended, the level of potential conflict is likely to increase, so is the usefulness of the moral rules (Beauchamp and Childress 1994). The emerging importance of ethical issues in decision-making urges the integration of ethical principles into the decision-making mechanism. Beauchamp and Childress (1979) refined these ethical principles, establishing the “four-principles approach” to biomedical ethics, which remains the standard today (Nairn 2013). SEFED adopts the four ethical principles: nonmaleficence, beneficence, respect for autonomy, and justice or fairness. SEFED relies on nonmaleficence to identify the negative unintended consequences of food experience innovations, beneficence provides ideas for positive agents of change in the food system, autonomy boosts the individual responsibilities for food well-being, and fairness promotes a societal perspective.

Summary of Findings

In short, SEFED is an ethical approach to decision-making embedded within a systematic approach to the innovation process. SEFED fosters customer-centric and cocreated food experiences throughout three key steps of innovation: (1) gathering consumer data, (2) generating ideas, and (3) testing ideas. The ultimate goal of SEFED is to promote food well-being.

SEFED framework revises the traditional conceptual framework of food innovation. It addresses weaknesses of traditional design approach responsible for numerous unintended consequences. Specifically, building on insights derived from ecosystem theory and the ethical principles literature, SEFED extends innovation to include all actors who participate in the food experience ecosystem (systematic approach to decision-making) and integrates the four fundamental ethical propositions (do no harm, do good, ensure autonomy, ensure fairness) to food experience innovation. As such, in addition to preventing unintended negative
consequences of food innovation, SEFED promotes higher levels of individual and societal food well-being than traditional food design innovations.

**Key Contributions**

SEFED framework advances the literature on service experience innovation in three ways: highlights the relevance of the perceived cocreated value in design and innovation, promotes the consumer’s perspective in food experiences, and builds on the four ethical principles to solve the conflicts that affect innovation process. SEFED provides a roadmap to developing better food design, leading to higher levels of food well-being, and actor engagement (Brodie et al. 2019).

SEFED framework is useful for government agencies that design and implement food policies as well as practitioners who are involved in food innovation. By recognizing controversial interests and values, SEFED postulates a participatory platform for decision-making that is based on ethics. This approach increases the transparency of the innovation process and democratic pluralism (Kaiser 2012).

SEFED increases the performance of the entire ecosystem by increasing actor engagement too. The contribution of a wide range of interdependent actors is critical because, if well-coordinated, they create higher levels of overall well-being (Kelleher et al. 2020). The agencies that adopt SEFED are likely to increase their perceived fairness, democracy, and transparency that are crucial drivers of future success. Perceptions of fairness drive consumers’ emotions and may turn into favorable market reactions.
THE IMPACT OF THE GREEN ATTRIBUTE AND TEXTURE ON PRODUCT AND PERSONAL GENDER IDENTITIES

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Keywords: self-identity theory, sustainability, texture, and gender identity

Description: Our findings suggest that the aesthetic feature of products, that of texture, can impact product and personal gender identity perceptions.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The current environment deterioration is due to economic expansion and individuals' consumption behaviors (Chen & Chai, 2010). Due to increasing awareness of environmental issues, consumers are shifting their purchasing habits towards a more sustainable lifestyle (Cherian & Jacob, 2012). The surge in sustainable behaviors also translated to an increase in green products available in the marketplace. A green product is a “product that will not pollute the earth or deplore natural resources and can be recycled or conserved” (Chen & Chai, 2010).

According to Berkowitz (1987), a product's design and appearance are necessary to capture consumers' attention (Page & Herr, 2002), and it can influence their self-image and financial decisions (Grewal, 2018). Drawing up on self-identity theory, we demonstrate how might aesthetic features of a green product such as texture can affect product and gender identities.
Research Question

A person's self-identity exists both consciously and unconsciously, known as self-schema and self-representation (Horowitz, 1998). Failure to adapt to gender roles and expectations can result in negative repercussions economically, socially, and physiologically (Major & O'Brien, 2005). Hence, when creating a self-identity, conforming to social gender norms is very influential. Prior research has shown that many products have an inherent gender association (Boroditsky, Schmidt, & Phillips, 2003). Even more specifically, the aesthetics of products can be linked to gender-stereotypes (Fugate & Phillips, 2010) and self-identity (Brough et al., 2016).

Gender anthropomorphism suggests that a product can be perceived as either male or female (Van den Hende & Mugge, 2014), thus, eliciting product gender assumptions in consumers after exposure to products of different textures, among other attributes of aesthetic dimensions (Tilburg, Lieven, Herrmann, & Townsend, 2015). Given that the green attribute is related to rougher surface textures, this may lead products to be perceived as more feminine. Indeed, green products are often associated with femininity due to the stereotype that "green consumers are more feminine" (Bennett & Williams, 2011). Hence, we examine the relationship between the type of texture (rough vs. smooth) and gender identity (feminine vs. masculine) for green products.

Method and Data

The study was a 2 (product type: green vs. non-green) × 2 (texture type: rough vs. smooth) between-subjects experimental design. Participants from Mechanical Turk (n = 220; M_age = 36.02) were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions. After successful manipulation checks on product and texture types, we ran ANCOVAs with novelty.
For product femininity, a significant two-way interaction emerged between product type and texture on product femininity ($F(1, 215) = 4.13, p < .05$). Follow-up contrasts indicated that participants perceived green products with a rough texture as more feminine than green products with a smooth texture ($M_{\text{Rough}} = 4.60$ vs. $M_{\text{Smooth}} = 4.06$; $F(1, 215) = 4.13, p < .05$). Additionally, individuals perceived non-green products with a smooth texture to be more feminine than green products with the same texture ($M_{\text{Non-green}} = 4.54$ vs. $M_{\text{Green}} = 4.06$; $F(1, 215) = 10.11, p < .01$).

For personal gender identity, a marginal significant two-way interaction emerged ($F(1, 215) = 3.40, p = .07$). The contrasts indicated that participants evaluated themselves as more masculine when they were exposed to a non-green (vs. green) product with a smooth texture ($M_{\text{Non-green}} = 4.39$ vs. $M_{\text{Green}} = 3.93$; $F(1, 215) = 5.67, p < .05$).

**Summary of Findings**

Our findings suggest that the aesthetic feature of products, that of texture, can impact product and personal gender identity perceptions. Specifically, we find that green products with a rough texture are evaluated more feminine than those with a smooth texture. Additionally, our analysis revealed that non-green products with smooth texture affirm individuals' masculine identity. When individuals are exposed to non-green products with a smooth texture, the masculinity self-identity is triggered.

In contemporary times, gender does not have to dictate self-identity any longer. Our findings that products with green attributes and rough surface textures are evaluated as more feminine should not only be viewed as a consumer preference rather, as a conformity to gender norms by means of product and personal gender-identity.

**Key Contributions**
The sustainable marketing movement began dating back to the 1980s but has since evolved, indicating that individuals are more willing to go green to help reduce their environmental impact (Cherian & Jacob, 2012). Due to the progressive nature of green behavior and marketing, an extent literature has demonstrated the ways consumers perceive green products, and more specifically, their aesthetics (Sauer & Sonderegger, 2010). However, there is a lack of literature regarding specific aesthetic features of green products, such as texture, and how those influence product and personal gender identities.

Our findings have several managerial implications relevant to product design and marketing in relation to aesthetics and product/personal gender identities. To encourage consumers to purchase green products, manufacturers can utilize a rough texture to enhance the feminine identity associated with the product. Conversely, green products with a smooth texture can be used to mitigate the feminine product identity. Our findings indicate that the association of femininity and green may be mitigated by altering the product texture when targeting a more masculine market.

References are available upon request.
THE USE OF STATUS FOR THE PROMOTION OF INTERGROUP HELPING

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Keywords: intergroup helping, fair trade, anti-egalitarianism, status, altruism

Description: Our research demonstrates that utilising status rather than altruism in marketing communications helps to promote intergroup helping to consumers who are not generally inclined to help groups in need.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Intergroup helping, i.e. a group providing aid to another group (Van Leeuwen and Zagefka 2017), has been examined through the theoretical lens of power (Nadler 2009). The literature demonstrates an inhibitory effect of power on the ability and willingness to help groups in need (Kteily et al. 2017; Rios et al. 2015). Furthermore, the literature shows that high-power consumers help others for the purpose of self-enhancement (Jin et al. 2020).

Yet, there has been scant research that utilises high-power consumers’ self-serving motivation for intergroup helping in the development of persuasive appeals. Consequently, our study attempts to answer the research question about how to promote intergroup helping to high-power consumers through marketing appeals that cater to their self-serving motives. Status is an example of self-serving motivation because status signalling is based upon one’s “desire to associate or dissociate with members of their own and other groups” (Han et al. 2010). In addition to status, understanding intergroup helping requires marketers to take altruistic motives into account that stimulate individuals to help others (Stürmer and Snyder 2009).

Method and Data

We operationalised power as anti-egalitarianism (i.e. independent variable), which is a subtle exercise of power to maintain inequality between groups (Ho et al. 2015). Furthermore, we operationalised intergroup-helping as fair trade consumption (i.e. dependent variable) where the decision-making of the group of consumers in high-income countries (HIC) helps the group of workers in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC). We expect anti-egalitarianism to divide consumers in HIC into the group of those who do not buy fair trade in order to maintain the
prosperity gap with LMIC and the group of those who do buy fair trade in order to diminish the prosperity gap with LMIC.

We apply the congruency approach (Kidwell et al. 2013) and expect persuasive appeals utilising status to be in congruence with the features of anti-egalitarianism. This is because individuals with a high degree of anti-egalitarianism tend to signal status through luxury consumption to indicate that they have succeeded in the competitive jungle (Jung and Mittal 2020). Altruism is also relevant for researching intergroup helping (Stürmer and Snyder 2009) since, for example, fair trade campaigning materials often illustrate the hardships of workers in LMIC in order to raise the awareness of consumers in HIC (Staricco 2016).

**Summary of Findings**

665 participants completed a measure of anti-egalitarianism (Ho et al. 2015) before they were randomly assigned to one of three appeal manipulations (status, altruism, neutral). Participants then completed a measure of processing fluency (Kidwell et al. 2013) and willingness to buy fair trade clothing adapted from White, MacDonnell, and Ellard (2012).

We ran a moderated mediation analysis using Model 7 of the Process Macro (Hayes 2018) with 10,000 bootstrap samples. We found that anti-egalitarianism decreases processing fluency ($\beta = -0.1338, SE = 0.0436, p < .01, 95\% CI [−0.2194, −0.0481]$). Effect coding was used for the persuasive appeals (variable W1: neutral appeal = -1, altruistic appeal = 1, status-appeal = 0; variable W2: neutral appeal = -1, altruistic appeal = 0, status-appeal = 1). The altruistic appeal (W1) enhanced the negative effect of anti-egalitarianism on processing fluency ($\beta = -0.0845, SE = 0.0374, p < .05, 95\% CI [−0.1579, −0.0111]$), whereas the status-appeal (W2) diminished the negative effect of anti-egalitarianism on processing fluency ($\beta = 0.0826, SE = 0.0398, p < .01, 95\% CI [0.0101, 0.1552]$).
0.0344, \( p < .05, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.0150, 0.1502] \). Processing fluency then increased the willingness to buy (\( \beta = 0.7431, \text{SE} = 0.0464, p < .0001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.6519, 0.8342] \)). Importantly, the index of moderated mediation was significant for W1 (\( -0.0628, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.1230, -0.0053] \)) as well as for W2 (\( 0.0614, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.0038, 0.1238] \)). Finally, there is a direct effect of anti-egalitarianism on willingness to buy (\( \beta = -0.1190, \text{SE} = 0.0543, p < .05, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.2257, -0.0122] \)).

**Key Contributions**

This study sits in the context of fair trade. An overemphasis in persuasive appeals on the ethical character of fair trade could risk ignoring consumers who are not mainly driven by social responsibility in their purchasing decisions (Yamoah et al. 2016).

Equity as the fair trade’s basic concept has become subject to new interpretations (Ballet and Carimentrand 2010). We used this scope for interpretation to design and examine interventions that work for those who oppose equity. Our study demonstrates that anti-egalitarian consumers are more willing to buy fair trade when they are exposed to status-appeals, because the latter can be processed with more ease. This means that appeals utilising status rather than altruism draw in anti-egalitarian consumers, whereas fluency indicates congruency between anti-egalitarianism and appeal type.

The potentially large group of consumers with anti-egalitarian influences has not yet been successfully reached through contemporary altruistic fair trade marketing. This consumer group does not seem to respond to advertising appeals that place an overemphasis on ethical product attributes, but this group could be reached by marketing communications that illustrate status.

References are available upon request.
WARM GLOW OR COLD CASH:  
DESIGNING SALES PROMOTION TACTICS  
FOR SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS IN E-COMMERCE  

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Keywords: sustainability, customer behavior, price discount, cause-related marketing, brand attitude  

Description: Based on a field experiment combined with a customer survey, we investigate the effect of different sales promotion tactics on both purchase and brand attitude considering customer’s personal norms.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Customers’ interests have shifted towards sustainable products over the last years. Nevertheless, sustainable products still struggle with intense competition. To survive brands have to consider sales promotion tactics also for sustainable products (Kim and Han 2019).

The impact of sales promotion tactics are especially interesting in the interplay of e-commerce and sustainable products. In an online environment, prices are easily comparable and thus, customers show a comparably higher price sensitivity. Moreover, discounts are rather common in e-commerce (Chevalier and Goolsbee 2003).

At the same time, following the benefit-congruency-principle (Chandon, Wansink, and Laurent 2000) promotion tactics should be suitable for the respective product meaning the key benefit of promotion should be congruent with the promoted product. In addition, previous findings indicate a lower price sensitivity for sustainable products (Kim and Han 2019).

Due to this interplay an analysis of the different sales promotion tactics is needed. Previous literature has mainly focused on price premiums for sustainable products (Pelsmacker et al. 2005; Tully and Winer 2014), thus the question arises: What is an efficient sales promotion tactic for sustainable products in e-commerce in regard to both purchase and brand attitude?

Method and Data

We test our hypotheses based on a unique dataset obtained from a large-scale online field experiment. The field experiment is conducted in February and March, 2021 with a German online brand for sustainable products and allows for observing actual customer reactions of almost 80,000 users. We combined this field experiment with an after sale survey of more than 600 survey responses. Due to this we are able to analyze the effects of the different sales
promotion tactics (price discount vs. cause-related marketing) on both purchase as well as brand attitude.

Going even further, we investigate how the relationship to brand attitude changes with an increase in personal norms, the feeling of moral obligation to follow behaviors to benefit others, according to an internalized value structure and without regard for social or material self-benefits.

We use binary logistic and linear regression models to analyze our data. Due to random allocation of users to the different treatment groups, the variables are independent of the error term and no additional control variables on the user level are required.

Summary of Findings

In a first step, we analyze the effect of the different sales promotion tactics, price discount and cause-related marketing on purchase. Our findings indicate that discounts have a significant positive impact on purchase while we cannot confirm a positive impact of cause-related marketing on orders.

In a second step, we investigate the impact of these sales promotion tactics on brand attitude while having personal norms as a moderator. We can confirm our hypotheses that cause-related marketing has a significant positive impact on brand attitude, while also price discounts, against our hypotheses, significantly positive impacts brand attitude. Having high personal norms significantly negatively impacts both relationships and thus weakens the positive impact on brand attitude. Based on our simple slope analyses we can derive that in regard to price discounts the means significantly differentiate for both low and high personal norms. The findings reveal in case of no price discount compared to having a price discount an even lower brand attitude for low personal norms and an even higher brand attitude for high personal norms. In regard to
cause-related marketing we see significant differentiations in means for low personal norms resulting in even higher brand attitude compared to having cause-related marketing.

**Key Contribution**

Our work sheds light on the interesting interplay of sustainability and e-commerce. On the one hand, in an online environment price sensitivity is high and sales promotion tactics are widely spread (Chevalier and Goolsbee 2003). On the other hand, previous literature indicate a lower price sensitivity for sustainable products (Kim and Han 2019). Adding to this, based on the benefit-congruency principle (Chandon, Wansink, and Laurent 2000) the promotion tactic should be congruent with the promoted product, that would result in a positive effect of cause-related marketing. Thus, we add to the benefit-congruency principle by analyzing what the main driver in the interplay of e-commerce and sustainability is.

Our findings indicate that in regard to price discounts we can still confirm a high price sensitivity. In line with the benefit-congruency principle we also see a positive impact of cause-related marketing on brand attitude. However, an increase of personal norms weakens both relationships. This can be explained by the persuasion knowledge theory (Friestadt and Wright 1994) indicating that customers uncover promotion tactics as persuasion tactics and perceive these, in case of high personal norms, negatively. We give managers insights on the effect of different sales promotion tactics for sustainable products in e-commerce.

*References are available upon request.*
B2B Marketing, Supply Chain Management and Sales Management
ADVANCING B2B SOCIAL SELLING: THE RELEVANCY OF POST PERSONALITY

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Keywords: Social selling, LinkedIn, brand personality, posting

Description: This research extends the literature on B2B social selling by focalizing the study on testing the impact of posts’ brand personality on customer engagement behaviors. Moreover, our research provides a more parsimonious classification of engagement in social media (intuitive behaviors, demonstrative behaviors, and proactive behaviors). It also contributes to the research stream concerned with understanding customer engagement as a process (e.g., Viswanathan et al. 2017). Our findings suggest that customer engagement evolves from intuitive behaviors (e.g., impressions) through demonstrative behaviors (e.g., clicks) to proactive behaviors (e.g., becoming a follower).

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Questions

Our proposed framework attempts to address the following research questions: (1) How are the different customer engagement behaviors associated (i.e., user’s reaction mechanisms)? (2) What post’s brand personality dimensions lead to more customer engagement behaviors? (3) What are the cumulative effects (i.e., elasticities) of post’s brand personality dimensions and the user intuitive and demonstrative engagement behaviors on the number of new followers (proactive engagement behavior)?

Method and Data

Using data from a consultancy firm operating in multiple countries, we develop a vector autoregressive econometric model with control (exogenous) variables (VARX) of the LinkedIn echoverse including posts’ brand personality and customer engagement behaviors (intuitive, demonstrative, proactive). The focal firm serves directly to B2B firms, facing a challenging sales funnel as most of the services are not previously budgeted and require high adaptation to the customer requirements. The dataset spans almost two years of
weekly information, considering seasonality, lagged-variables, and trends effects, which are common elements in longitudinal analysis (e.g., Hewett et al. 2016; De Vries, Gensler, and Leeflang 2017).

For our study, we consider perceived sincerity of LinkedIn posts, perceived excitement of LinkedIn posts, perceived competence of LinkedIn posts, perceived sophistication of LinkedIn posts, perceived ruggedness of LinkedIn posts, number of impressions, number of likes, number of clicks, number of shares, number of comments, and number of new followers (all measured at the weekly level) as endogenous variables.

**Brand personality.** The posts shared by the B2B firm on its LinkedIn page show traits of brand personality based on the content and design of the posts. Five independent coders (customers of the focal firm) analyzed the content data of 211 posts (accounting for the whole research period), using Aaker’s (1997) brand personality framework. The coders used the traits informed by the brand personality framework (Aaker 1997, p. 352) to conceptualize the dimensions.

**Intuitive behavior.** This behavior refers to how many times a post was seen by users on LinkedIn (i.e., impressions) and can possibly affect the firm’s demonstrative behaviors, proactive behavior (new follower count), and brand personality of posts (via feedback effects).

**Demonstrative behavior.** For each week in the period of observation, we computed the total number of likes (including celebrate, support, love, insightful, and curious), which is deemed a direct performance of posts (Chang et al. 2019). Also, we computed the number of clicks, shares, and comments at the weekly level.

**Proactive behavior.** We aggregate the daily number of new followers of the firm’s LinkedIn profile at the weekly level.

**Control variables.** We control for other factors that could affect the focal firm’s LinkedIn echoverse. Namely, we control for wins, events, sales calls, emails, website visits, LinkedIn page visits, and general interest regarding the service category the focal firm operates in. Additionally, we also include an indicator for whether an observation was before or during the COVID-19 pandemic because this catastrophic situation can affect social exchange and customer engagement in B2B settings (Mora Cortez & Johnston, 2020).

Wins are total accepted quotes (in €) of the company at the weekly level. The date of the win is defined as the day on which a purchase order was generated by the customer, or, if a customer did not use a purchase order, then either a formal email or letter confirmation was sent. This variable accounts for the financial
performance of the focal firm. Events are all points of contact with groups of managers (considering focal firm’s target market) such as trade shows, seminars, summits, etc. Sales calls are buyer-seller telephone interaction initiated by the seller to inform about its services. Emailing is communication via email initiated by the seller to inform about its services. Website visits could be a signal of interest in the firm’s services and can positively affect the firm’s LinkedIn echoverse. We compute this variable as the total number of weekly visits to the focal firm’s website. LinkedIn page visits are the number of visits the LinkedIn page of the focal firm received at the weekly level.

Summary of Findings

B2B marketeers are struggling with the necessity of communicating more content in social media due to the pandemic as extant buyer-seller interaction is vastly developed in digital settings. We identified that the personality of a published post has significant influence on how B2B customers behave (engage) in online social networks. B2B marketeers can work on elaborating posts (via their content and design) that look and feel “exciting,” “competent,” and “rugged.” Particularly, they can manage the prominence of such personality traits based on the desired social media outcomes as other channels (e.g., sales force) might be in place to drive sales conversion. Through the positive impact of such personality traits, the marketing executives can establish a framework to develop content not only in social media but also to revisit their overall communication and advertising strategy.

Key Contributions

Digital technologies have disrupted the way B2B firms act in today’s marketplace (Diba, Vella, and Abratt 2019). A key driver of this rapid transformation resides in the rise and spread of social media platforms offering new opportunities to interact with customers. Social media afford unique paths to engage customers on deep and meaningful levels (Dessart 2017). Enabling and sustaining customer engagement through social media marketing represent a vital endeavor to secure sales (Agnihotri 2020). Hence, B2B service firms have focused on such digital platforms as a response to the modern customer following a purchase-consumption circular loop (Vieira et al. 2019; Ancillai et al. 2019). However, B2B companies are hesitant about what type of content to publish (Juntunen, Ismagilova, and Oikarinen 2020). This study, set in a B2B service setting, examines the relative impact of posts’ brand personality (sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, ruggedness) on
different customer engagement behaviors (intuitive, demonstrative, proactive) and their interrelations in LinkedIn. A unique longitudinal dataset covering the whole LinkedIn echoverse adds rigor as prior research argues over the significance of in-depth understanding of social media functionality while considering the time-varying essence of customer engagement behaviors (Meire, Ballings, and Van den Poel 2017).

References are available on request.
BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS ONLINE PLATFORM RELATIONSHIPS: A TRANSACTION COST APPROACH

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Keywords: online platforms, contracts, transaction cost analysis, contract specificity, business-to-business.

Description: The present paper analyzes business-to-business relationships in the online platform context from a transaction cost perspective.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Online platforms are web-based structures that allow users (firms or individuals) to connect, program, and exchange data, content, and applications (Plantin, Lagoze, Edwards, and Sandvig 2016). For example, Apple App Store and Google Apps serve as online platform intermediaries for smartphone applications. App developers can sell their Apps through online platforms in exchange of a fee. Online platforms manage a dynamic and large number of relationships with content providers. For example, Amazon has 2.3 million active sellers and about 1.2 million sellers joined this year (MarketplacePulse 2020). This dynamism exposes a need to manage relationships and contracts in a different way.
Therefore, this paper addresses the following questions: how do online platforms manage the relationship with their content providers? Are B2B relationships and contracts different in online vs. offline contexts? If so, how and why? Based on Transaction Cost Analysis, we attempt to examine these questions.

Method and Data

In this conceptual paper, we draw from Transaction Cost Analysis (TCA) to examine the governance structure of B2B relationships between online platforms and content providers. TCA (Coase 1937) describes how governance mechanisms can ameliorate transaction cost. TCA takes into account human nature and suggest that opportunism and bounded rationality are a part of all exchanges (Williamson 1981). TCA suggests that the inability to identify opportunistic parties, ex ante, increases contract complexity.

Bounded rationality and opportunism are present in all exchanges but context-specific uncertainties make contracting in B2B online platform relationships particularly complex. Bounded rationality limits online platforms’ ability to identify those customers that will use the platform services in the long-term. More importantly, bounded rationality prevents online platforms from knowing which customers will be key contributors to the platforms’ profit. Online platforms must adjust their governance structure to be flexible to the changes their customers go through at different times.

Williamson (1981) also suggests that there are three critical dimensions to transactions: uncertainty, the frequency with which transactions recur, and the degree to which durable, transaction-specific investments are required. The transactions in the B2B online platform context differ from supplier-seller relationships in that there are additional sources of
uncertainty, the dynamic of the recurrence of transactions changes, and that there are few sources of asset specificity.

**Summary of Findings**

Based on TCA, we offer several propositions. First, we propose that buyer lock-in in B2B online platforms may only occur when a product offering is truly unique and the platform is looking to reduce opportunistic behavior by the seller in the future.

*Proposition 1: Buyer lock-in in B2B online platform relationships will occur when a seller’s product is unique, leading to higher contract specificity.*

Second, we propose that the complexity of online platform transactions may make the parties uncertain of the expectations that each have regarding the revenue-sharing agreement. If there is a high number of transactions, the platform might want to revisit the revenue-sharing agreement and consent to lower their percentage share in order to keep the seller happy. In B2B online platform relationships, then, the platform might want lower specificity in contracts regarding higher complexity transactions in order to manage uncertainty and maintain flexibility.

*Proposition 2: Transaction complexity in B2B online platform relationships is associated with lower contract specificity.*

Third, we propose that, consistent with technology firms, platforms should develop lower specificity contracts when the seller’s product is difficult to evaluate ex ante in order to allow for the management of uncertainty and flexibility.

*Proposition 3: Difficulty of ex ante product evaluation in B2B online platform relationships is associated with lower contract specificity.*

Finally, we propose that network effects might reduce uncertainty by preventing sellers from acting opportunistically or from leaving a relationship, leading to a lock-in situation.
case, platforms might be able to make less-specific contracts without the fear of high ex post costs.

*Proposition 4: Network effects are associated with lower contract specificity.*

**Key Contributions**

- This conceptual paper proposes that B2B online platform relationships differ from brick-and-mortar buyer-supplier relationships due to their more dynamic nature.
- Researchers must pay attention to the effects of high uncertainty and low asset specificities in B2B online relationships and how these play a role in the success or failure of the business relationship.
- We contribute to the literature of relationship marketing by drawing from Transaction Cost Analysis to challenge the notions that have been applied to B2B relationships.
- Managers of B2B online platform relationships should revisit the firm’s contractual governance and consider the different factors that might be influencing each of the parties’ preferences.
Customer–Salesperson Negotiations in Times of Crisis

Abstract

Extant literature mostly has studied how business-to-business (B2B) customer–salesperson negotiations evolve in “normal” circumstances, that is, not during crises. However, recent crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic illustrate the need to advance academic theory and provide more relevant guidance for marketing practitioners. Accordingly, this article takes a mixed-method approach, starting with a theories-in-use investigation based on 22 in-depth interviews with professional salespeople and customers. Then a quantitative examination covers more than 70,000 sales opportunities by an industrial firm. The results reveal that as the crisis intensifies, changes in the sales funnel increase salespeople’s perceived dependency on customers and reduce customers’ perceived dependency on them. This power shift should benefit customers in subsequent negotiations. However, during crises, in contrast with normal times, customers are actually less likely to capitalize on their power if they have close relationships with salespeople, and salespeople thus can elicit higher prices. This finding has momentous implications for both customer–salesperson negotiation and power–dependency theories. The resulting “homegrown” theory, native to marketing and sales, provides much needed insights.
Key Contributions to Academe and Practitioners

Extant literature has mainly studied customer–salesperson negotiations in “normal” circumstances. As the COVID-19 pandemic shows though, large exogenous shocks cause severe business disruptions, which require sales teams to adapt to unprecedented adversity. Until now however, research has not explained the crisis-induced challenges that salespeople face in customer negotiations.

With a novel approach to the situation, this study shows that as a crisis intensifies, salespeople encounter changes in the sales funnel that render them more dependent on customers, whereas customers become less dependent on salespeople. These changes in perceived dependency result in a power shift toward customers, which customers subsequently exploit during negotiations.

One unexpected, theoretically novel finding reveals that during a crisis, customers are less likely to capitalize on their power, particularly if they have strong relationships with salespeople. Therefore, salespeople can demand higher prices. These findings contrast with extant literature, which characterizes customers as opportunistic negotiators, particularly when they have good relationships with their suppliers. Therefore, our results suggest that in times of crisis, salespeople’s “negotiator’s dilemma” is alleviated—that is, salespeople face a less pronounced trade-off between economic negotiation outcomes and good customer relationships.

They also suggest some seemingly counterintuitive options to improve the prices salespeople negotiate with customers during a crisis. Rather than following conventional wisdom on how to negotiate effectively, in times of crisis, salespeople may benefit from admitting their weaknesses to customers with which they have close relationships. In addition, our study provides guidance on how to enhance salespeople’s power positions to improve their price enforcement among customers with whom they have weak relationships.
Introduction

Businesses frequently must respond and adapt to environmental changes, including changes instigated by crises. A recent example is the coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic, which caused a major global economic shock (Chakraborty and Maity 2020). At the forefront of such struggles are firms’ sales forces (Hartmann and Lussier 2020; Sharma, Rangarajan, and Paesbrugghe 2020). Despite these challenges in practice, academic literature is strikingly silent about the challenges that salespeople face in crises. This dearth of academic analysis is troublesome for two reasons: First, from the managerial perspective, price negotiations are extremely important. Although price is the most important lever on a company’s profit (Marn, Roegner, and Zawada 2004), salespeople tend to grant discounts too easily (Alavi et al. 2018; Joseph 2001), which is a problem that may be aggravated during a crisis (Nadjam 2020). Second, only limited academic understanding exists to indicate which theories can help explain and predict how price negotiations are affected by crises.

These issues are the starting points of our paper. We proceed in two stages to determine how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected customer–salesperson negotiations in B2B markets. Because of the lack of empirically tested theories in this domain, we adopt a theories-in-use approach to uncover practitioners’ mental models on the topic (Zeithaml et al. 2020). Then, to test key propositions developed in our first study, we conduct a quantitative study of more than 70,000 sales opportunities, drawn from an industrial manufacturer’s CRM system.

These studies produce several intriguing findings. In particular, crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, lead to a power shift from salespeople to customers, as the result of changes in their perceived relative dependency (Emerson 1962). Our study shows that the power shift encourages customers to be self-serving and to exploit their increased power during
negotiations. However, in times of crisis, good relationships also can improve negotiation outcomes for salespeople, because customers tend not to capitalize on their increased power.

**Study 1: A Theories-in-Use Qualitative Investigation**

We use theories-in-use and a grounded theory approach (Corbin and Strauss 2014; Zeithaml et al. 2020) to build theoretical models that are “grounded” in the mindsets of both the researcher and the participant. Our primary data source consists of 22 semi-structured interviews, conducted in September 2020 to gather the experiences of salespeople and customers in the European business-to-business (B2B) industrial technology sector throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Our sample included 7 salespeople, 2 customers, and 13 managers who provided both buyer and seller perspectives. Our procedure rigorously followed the grounded theory approach (Corbin and Strauss 2014; Glaser and Strauss 1967). During the first stage of analysis (open coding), we conducted a detailed, line-by-line evaluation of recorded words and phrases, to generate descriptive, in vivo, process, and structural codes (Saldaña 2013). In the second stage, we conducted axial coding by clustering the categories from the first stage according to conditions, interactions, and consequences to determine the properties and dimensions of each category (Corbin and Strauss 2014). The third stage comprised a selective coding process, in which we harmonized the categories to streamline them into primary themes and weave a pervasive narrative. Our analyses exposed the model shown in Figure 1.
An Intensifying Crisis Changes the Sales Funnel

**Fewer sales opportunities.** Most participants indicated an overall reduction in demand for products and services, particularly when the crisis was at its most intense, which culminated in fewer sales opportunities within the market. Reasons were twofold. Firstly, spending cuts by customers who became “extremely cash conservative” (Ben), lead to “big capex cuts right at the start” (David). Secondly, delays or cancelations of non-essential purchases occurred until market uncertainty reduced. Customers had to “make do with what we’ve got” (Francis), which culminated in a delay in demand for new products and services. Liam described this as “not so much a drop in demand but sliding demands,” as his projects were delayed until the purchase risk was reduced.

**Longer purchase processes.** Participants noticed that sales opportunities took longer to close for three reasons. First, additional controls on purchase approvals included escalation of the approval to more senior managers, and a reduction in the amounts that purchasers were authorized to approve:
“The approvals process is longer. Everything gets crosschecked maybe three times as opposed to once or twice. The thresholds for amounts is lower and everyone wants eyes on what’s being spent.” – Matthew, Sales and Business Development Manager

Second, COVID-19 mitigation measures became part of the customer’s purchase criteria to ensure that products and services were delivered as originally intended, despite the change in external factors:

“The only add on things are just COVID measures of course, and quite detailed, additional risk assessments that they require for COVID and [filling in] questionnaires of all the personnel involved in the project.” – Ivan, Project Manager

Third, reduced availability of purchasing and procurement teams due to layoffs slowed the purchase approvals process as indicated by David:

“A couple of constraints on projects and jobs meant that operators were just, all of a sudden, impossible to speak to. It doesn’t matter how good your relationship was with these people, you just couldn’t get through.” – David, Business Development Director

**Changes in Sales Funnel Increase Perceived Salesperson Dependency**

An intriguing insight from our study is that, as a result of fewer sales opportunities and longer purchase processes, perceived dependency between salespeople and customers changes during times of crises. Dependency arises when “actor A aspires to goals or gratifications whose achievement is facilitated by appropriate actions on actor B’s part” (Emerson 1962, p. 32). As a crisis intensifies salespeople perceive greater dependency on customers, due to both (1) increased pressure to source and secure new sales opportunities and (2) reduced communication between parties that disrupts the flow of information salespeople need to achieve sales targets.
Increase in pressure. For salespeople, an increase in perceived dependency on customers results from an increase in pressure, because sales targets become harder to achieve, sales opportunities decrease, and purchase processes lengthen. Pressure manifested as a combination of applied managerial pressure and self-inflicted pressure:

“There has been pressure on us to perform as a sales team… to the best of our ability considering the circumstances.” – Kevin, Sales Manager

“Am I actually being productive here [at home], am I actually making any progress whatsoever? It has been definitely a lot more intense than it would normally be.” – David, Business Development Director

Communication challenges. Participants in our study also underscored how communication challenges disrupted the flow of sales information between customers and salespeople, while also reducing the number of high-quality interactions in which salespeople could influence customers:

“We did have a two-to-three-week period of not a lot of correspondence at all, and I think that was people transitioning to working from home and actually just understanding the gravity of what is happening.” – Elizabeth, Sales Manager

Reduced communications made filling the sales funnel especially difficult for salespeople who felt they had to increase their communications efforts to minimize their dependency on customers and initiate sales interactions:

“You have to send out a lot more emails … do a lot more searching and emailing and messaging to secure meaningful conversations.” – Alex, Business Development Manager

Because of these communications challenges, salespeople also had fewer occasions to exert their influence (e.g., McFarland, Challagalla, and Shervani 2006):
“Sometimes it’s quite difficult when you’re in a group of five or six people and you’re the only one talking…. Especially when there’s no cameras either, so you don’t even know whether you’re talking to anyone.” – Ivan, Project Manager

**Changes in Sales Funnels Decrease Perceived Customer Dependency**

While crises such as COVID-19 increase salespeople’s perceived dependency on customers, customers in turn perceive *less* dependency on individual salespeople for two reasons.

*Researching alternatives.* Longer purchasing processes create more time for customers to research alternative solutions and source multiple quotes. This extended time then enables them to improve their knowledge and awareness without the need for particular salespeople; it also increases their reliance on supplier websites:

“People were looking online late in the evening, early in the morning and our [website] analytics went a lot higher than they normally would.” – Elizabeth, Sales Manager

Some customers adapted their purchasing policies too, seeking quotes from several suppliers to secure the best deal, even if, at times, it was merely an exercise:

“Even though we know what we want … we have to go out to tender … to show we’ve done our due diligence.” – Steve, Academic Purchaser

*Favorable purchase terms.* Fewer sales opportunities and longer purchase processes have the combined effect of increasing market competition for salespeople pursuing the same sales opportunities. Participants thus provided or conceded discounts more readily than usual:

“We’ve been offered discounts without asking for them, particularly on larger orders… I think [salespeople are] probably a bit more willing because of COVID.” – Alex, Business Development Manager
The combination of more perceived dependency among salespeople and less perceived dependency among customers shifts power substantially, as predicted and explained by Emerson’s (1962, p. 32), power–dependency theory: “The power of A over B is equal to and based upon the dependence of B upon A.” Our study confirms that power is a property of social, rather than individual, relationships; it demonstrates that changes in external environments (e.g., COVID-19) cause power shifts. As both previous research and our findings show, mutual dependency is key to buyer–seller relationships (e.g., Anderson, Lodish, and Weitz 1987). We show that crises can shift dependency away from buyers and toward sellers when mutuality becomes less pronounced. This shift occurs because customers’ need to manage their increased risk reduces their purchasing requirements (Shen et al. 2020), while salespeople’s need to secure sales opportunities (i.e., to meet sales targets) remains. Therefore, Emerson’s (1962) power–dependency theory effectively explains the power shift toward customers during crises.

**Moderating Factors of the Power Shift**

The extent to which sales funnel changes alter perceptions of dependency (and thus power) between salespeople and customers is moderated by the relative importance of both the sale and the purchase. Given the page limit, we refrain from a detailed discussion.

**Customer–Salesperson Negotiations**

Customers in our sample not only perceived their own reduced dependency but also were aware of salespeople’s increased dependency (“our suppliers are keen to sell again” [Alex]). Salespeople’s conscious and unconscious actions, such as issuing ultimatums and pushing customers too hard (Brudner 2017), can reinforce such perceptions. As a result, many customers decided to capitalize on their power by claiming price discounts from salespeople:
“Right at the beginning, a couple of blanket emails [from customers] were sent out, quite firm emails actually, [saying] that [they] expected discounts in these trying times, and [suppliers] need to be very supportive and reactive.” – Elizabeth, Sales Manager

Moreover, customers reported leveraging project delays, requesting additional items be included in deals, and applying more pressure on salespeople to comply with requests for discounts. These self-interested actions strengthen negotiation positions for customers; according to Harry, “The customer had already placed the order, and they [then] said, can you do this additionally?” which reinforces the perceived dependency of salespeople on customers.

The extent to which customers succeed in securing discounts depended on salespeople’s reactions to the power shift. That is, as customers attempted to exert power over salespeople, the salespeople either conceded to customer demands and their exertions of power or attempted to regain power and exert control over negotiations. In our sample, salespeople used both strategies though their increased perceived dependency led them to succumb more frequently to customer power by reducing prices:

“We’ve always said we are not the cheapest to do business with. I don’t know if that’s true anymore.” – Ben, Regional Manager

*The Pivotal Element: Relationship Quality*

According to prior literature, long-term customer relationships are particularly prone to negotiations for better prices (Anderson and Jap 2005; Wieseke, Alavi, and Habel 2014).

Intriguingly though, our results indicate the *opposite*: During the COVID-19 pandemic, in good customer relationships, customers were *more* lenient in price negotiations. This is because in a crisis of the magnitude of COVID-19, a good relationship leads customers to show understanding and empathy and they can relate to the pronounced challenges that salespeople are
experiencing. Alex reported that these customers gave him “a free pass this time around because no one saw it coming” and Kevin observed that his good customers were “fairly understanding—they’re all experiencing the same problems as well.” Interestingly Oliver referred to customers with whom his company has a good relationship:

“During the crisis, humans change—they are more amenable to each other. They’re more willing to do favors. You don’t even notice you’re [offering favors yourself]—it’s a general pandemic thing and we’re all helping each other out.” – Oliver, Managing Director

Such explications are intriguing because transaction cost theories which underpin new institutional economics (see Teraji 2018, p. 33) explain that self-serving actions arise when the realized benefits of an interaction exceed its costs. However, our results indicate that while customers could gain more by capitalizing on their power, doing so exacerbates the salesperson’s struggle, leading the customer to reduce their self-serving tendencies. This finding posits that in normal times, salespeople are reluctant to force high prices on customers to avoid threatening good relationships (Wieseke, Alavi, and Habel 2014), but in times of crisis, customers who show understanding for salespeople are willing to accept lower discounts and pay higher prices.

Study 2: A First Test of Theory

Research Questions

We quantitatively test key propositions from Study 1, using customer relationship management (CRM) data from a global machine tools manufacturer. Because the data do not comprise all constructs (e.g. salespeople’s and customers’ mutual dependency) this study focuses on selected relationships revealed in Study 1 (Table 1, also available as conceptual figure).
The supplier that we study produces and markets machinery that shapes sheet metal. It serves customers through a field-based sales force. Salespeople log sales opportunities into a CRM system, including products and prices pitched to customers, and update the entries regularly. Because the products are complex, this process on average takes four to five months. For our analyses, we extracted more than 76,000 sales opportunities between January 1, 2017, and December 31, 2020.

Table 1. Study 2: Integration with Study 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Link</th>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Crisis intensity → number of sales opportunities</td>
<td>4,346 salesperson–month observations</td>
<td>Mixed model (Poisson)</td>
<td>Crisis intensity reduces a salesperson’s number of open sales opportunities, confirming predictions from Study 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Crisis intensity → sales process duration</td>
<td>&gt;76,309 sales opportunities</td>
<td>Cox proportional hazard model</td>
<td>Crisis intensity prolongs an opportunity’s sales process, confirming predictions from Study 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Number of sales opportunities × relationship quality → negotiated price</td>
<td>1,763 won sales opportunities</td>
<td>Mixed model (Gauss)</td>
<td>Interactive effect of customer relationship quality and number of open sales opportunities on negotiated price is negative, confirming predictions from Study 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Purchase process duration × relationship quality → negotiated price</td>
<td>1,763 won sales opportunities</td>
<td>Mixed model (Gauss)</td>
<td>Interactive effect of customer relationship quality and sales process duration on negotiated price is insignificant, disconfirming predictions from Study 1.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Measures

We approximate crisis intensity using the publicly available Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker (OxCGRT 2020), which relates to countries’ containment and closure policies, economic responses, and health systems. We extracted each salesperson’s number of open sales opportunities at the end of each month as a count variable from the CRM data. We operationalize the purchase process duration in two ways. First, our data is censored data, and we use a survival analysis to analyze Link 2. Second, to analyze Link 4, we measure the purchase process duration for won opportunities, relative to the mean purchase process duration for the same product in the respective country in the year 2019, log-transformed. Similarly, negotiated price is the percentage mark-up achieved relative to the average price achieved for the same product in the respective country in 2019. We proxy for relationship
quality using the customer’s share of wallet, that is, we divide the sum of the prices of all won sales opportunities by the sum of the prices of all won and lost sales opportunities over three years. We include a dummy variable that indicates whether an opportunity was with a prospect (i.e., potential first-time customer), an opportunity’s absolute price level, and for product category and month fixed effects.

**Effect of Crisis Intensity on Number of Sales Opportunities (Link 1)**

To examine how intensity of a crisis affects a salesperson’s number of sales opportunities, we organize the data as a salesperson–month panel. We specify a three-level mixed-effects model, in which monthly observations $t$ are nested in salespeople $i$, who are nested in countries $c$:

$$
\text{open\_opportunities}_{it} = b_{0,ic} + b_1 \cdot \text{crisis\_intensity}_{tc} + \text{month}_t + r_{ic}.
$$

(1)

$$
b_{0,ic} = b_{0,c} + u_{ic}.
$$

(2)

$$
b_{0,c} = b_0 + v_c.
$$

(3)

We resort to a Poisson generalized linear mixed estimator, using R’s glmmTMB package. Results show that crisis intensity has a negative effect on the number of open sales opportunities ($b_1 = -.035, p < .05$). Thus, as we proposed in Study 1, when a crisis intensifies, salespeople encounter fewer sales opportunities.

**Effect of Crisis Intensity on Purchase Process Duration (Link 2)**

Because our data are censored at October 31, 2020, we employ a survival analysis to test whether the intensifying crisis increases purchase process duration. In our context, the event of interest is a customer making a decision and an opportunity being closed. Results of a Cox proportional hazard regression model significantly negative effect of crisis intensity on the likelihood of a sales opportunity being closed ($b = -.437, p < .001$). Figures are available (but not presented herein) to illustrate the survival curve.
**Effects on Negotiated Prices (Links 3 & 4)**

For Links 3 and 4 we used won opportunities between January 1–October 31, 2020, then matched them with the salesperson–month panel used to study Link 1. The resulting data set comprises 1,508 sales opportunities (o), nested in 273 salespeople (i), nested in 26 countries (c).

We specify the following three-level mixed effects model:

\[
\text{negotiated\_price}_{oic} = b_{0,ic} + b_1*\text{open\_opportunities}_{soi,t-1} + b_2*\text{sales\_process\_duration}_o + b_3*\text{relationship\_quality}_o + b_4*\text{open\_opportunities}_{soi,t-1}*\text{relationship\_quality}_o + b_5*\text{sales\_process\_duration}_o*\text{relationship\_quality}_o + b_6*\text{crisis\_intensity}_{oc} + b_7*\text{prospect}_o + b_8*\text{price\_level}_o + \text{product\_category}_o + \text{month}_o + r_{oic}. \tag{4}
\]

\[
b_{0,ic} = b_{0,c} + u_{ic}. \tag{5}
\]

\[
b_{0,c} = b_0 + v_c. \tag{6}
\]

We estimated the model using R’s lme4 package. Regarding Link 3, the interaction effect between the number of open sales opportunities and relationship quality is negative and significant (b4 = -.021, p < .01). An interaction plot (not presented herein) demonstrates that an increasing crisis intensity decreases the number of open opportunities. Regarding Link 4, the interaction effect between the purchase process duration and relationship quality is insignificant (b5 = .003, p > .05), rejecting the corresponding proposition from Study 1. We confirmed the robustness of our results through various checks, including controlling for endogeneity through Heckman’s selection correction and through a multilevel generalized method of moments approach (Kim and Frees 2007).

**Discussion**

This study makes several contributions to marketing and sales literature. First, it provides new academic insights into how crises, and the COVID-19 pandemic in particular, affects customer–salesperson interactions (Hartmann and Lussier 2020; Keränen, Salonen, and Terho 2020 AMA Summer Academic Conference).
2020; Sharma, Rangarajan, and Paesbrugghe 2020), and we build on several recent works on the impact of COVID-19 on sales forces. Second, we demonstrate that selling during a crisis, such as COVID-19, can be explained by power–dependency theory (Emerson 1962). To the best of our knowledge, researchers have not applied power–dependency theory to buyer–seller negotiations in times of crisis.

Third, we advance theoretical understanding of customer–salesperson negotiations. Although salespeople undertake a range of actions to rebalance a power shift that favors the customer, the nature of their negotiations depends on prior customer relationship quality. In times of crisis, good customer relationships reduce self-serving customer behaviors, such that customers are more understanding of salespeople’s challenges and deem capitalizing on their improved power positioning unjust. Thus, salespeople can elicit higher negotiated prices while maintaining good relationships with customers. This finding is significant; it qualifies prior literature that indicates loyal customers negotiate harder and get better prices (Wieseke, Alavi, and Habel 2014). We add a new facet to this dynamic by finding that during crises, if customer–salesperson relationships are strong, customers are more lenient in their negotiations, such that salespeople can capitalize on higher negotiated prices and simultaneously strengthen their relationships.

Fourth, we might expect that customer relationships deteriorate if salespeople realize higher prices as a result of the negotiator’s dilemma (Kaufmann 1987), but our interviews suggest the opposite in times of crisis: Good relationships foster customers’ understanding and empathy, so the customer–salesperson relationship is not harmed much during negotiations: Thus, in an intriguing contribution to negotiation theory, our findings suggest that crises may alleviate the negotiator’s dilemma. In our context, we propose that customers are more inclined
to help salespeople, leading to simultaneously higher prices and stronger relationships (Goldstein, Martin, and Cialdini 2008; Jecker and Landy 1969).

Fifth, transaction cost theories which underpin new institutional economics (see Teraji 2018, p. 33) explain that self-serving actions arise when the realized benefits of an interaction exceed its costs. Our results indicate that while customers could gain more financially by capitalizing on their power, they choose not to during a crisis. During a crisis, we posit that the emotional benefits achieved through helping salespeople who are struggling, outweigh the financial benefits that could be realized through exploiting a power advantage. This extension of traditional economics theories is surprising and warrants further research.

Finally, we answer Zeithaml et al.’s (2020) call for more “homegrown” theories that are native to the marketing discipline. Our theory demonstrates how crises affect customer–salesperson relationships, according to well-established power–dependency theory (Emerson 1962).

**Selected References**


IS THERE A SMART WAY TO MANAGE INDEPENDENT SALES AGENTS IN EXPORT MARKETS? – THE IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS OF MONITORING AND MOTIVATION PRACTICES

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Keywords: Sales agent management, motivation, monitoring, export performance

Description: This research investigates current best practice in international sales agent management (esp. monitoring, motivation) and highlights how exporters can bypass sales agents’ autonomy.

Research Question

Independent sales agents are likely to be used as foreign counterparts in common export practice as they reduce uncertainties evolving from a lack of foreign business knowledge (Chen and Martin 2001), are closer to target customers, and provide powerful market connections (Chakrabarti et al. 2014). Small- and medium sized enterprises (SME) use this option as their primary form of internationalization. Due to the sales agents’ autonomy, the exporter has only limited access to their actions (Aulakh and Genctürk 2000) which makes navigation and making an impact on behalf of the exporter rather complicated. This makes monitoring and motivation measures extremely important for establishing an effective market position and being competitive in the export market. From an academic perspective, what is already researched in a company-internal context, e.g. motivation and monitoring of the internal salesforce (Mallin and Pullins, 2009; Miao and Evans, 2014; Miao, Evans, and Zhou 2007) is largely neglected in the context of managing independent international partners.

Thus, we have been motivated by the research question: What are common monitoring and management practices that are used by exporters for sales agent navigation to ensure an effective cooperation?

Method and Data

Because prior research has not addressed internationals sales agent management in the SME context, we employ a mixed-methods design. First, 11 case studies (problem-centered interviews and secondary data) were conducted with representatives of German-based exporting SMEs. This explorative approach allowed to gain first insights into best practices concerning the interaction with and coordination of overseas sales agents and the identification of factors that steer the cooperation. For the interviews a part-structured interview-guideline is
used (Hopf 1995) and improved iteratively after each interview. All interviews are recorded, transcribed and analyzed with the software MAXQDA. Afterwards, in consideration of the findings from the interviews and extant literature, an online survey was designed to eventually generate a greater data set and enable hypotheses testing. This should allow to draw well-founded and generalizable conclusions and provide recommendations for action based on a greater data set. The data will be analyzed using the SmartPLS software.

Summary of Findings

The study represents an in-depth investigation of practices for monitoring and management of highly autonomous export partners using case study methodology. Concerning monitoring measures, findings underline that opportunities are rather limited due to the sales agents’ autonomy. A satisfying information flow and performance can be achieved through feedback sessions and meetings on a regular basis and agreeing on realistic performance targets. Identified management practices especially stress the importance of a strong interpersonal relationship between decision-makers. Furthermore, the integration of the sales agent and a sense of familiarity play the pivotal role.

Key Contributions

To our knowledge, underlying motivation and monitoring mechanisms have been mainly studied in more integrated relationship settings (e.g., Mallin and Pullins, 2009; Miao and Evans, 2014; Chakrabarti et al. 2014; Conde and Prybutok, 2020) or in the context of domestic relationships (e.g., Gilliland and Kim, 2014; Mehta, 2000). The study contributes to filling this gap by investigating how entirely autonomous sales agents are motivated and monitored.

References are available on request.
Project Termination: Alliance Portfolio Characteristics and NPD Project Performance

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Keywords: New Product Development, Interfirm Alliance, Project Termination, inter-organizational relationships, Transaction Cost Economics

Description: This study examines the effects of alliance portfolio characteristics and compositions on the likelihood of NPD project termination in the biopharmaceutical industry.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

How is the termination likelihood of NPD projects associated with characteristics and compositions of alliance portfolio linked to them?

Method and Data

We use econometrics modeling, specifically, logistic regressions to analyze our data. Our sample consists of 8,911 interfirm alliances linked to 3,725 new drug development projects by 387 biopharmaceutical companies.

Summary of Findings

First, we show that despite the importance of forming such alliances to expand the firm boundaries and resources, too many alliances can be costly to manage and harmful for the project. Our theoretical framework and empirical results show that low to moderate alliance portfolio size decreases the likelihood of project termination. However, at a turning point, forming additional alliances can damage project performance and increase the likelihood of project termination.
Second, our findings reveal that the type of alliance is also an important factor, and forming horizontal alliances with the same type of firms can create frictions (conflicts of interest and coordination costs) that lead to a higher likelihood of project termination. In our research setting of the biopharmaceutical industry, the focal biotechnology developer firms have the opportunity to create partnerships with similar companies (other biotechnology firms), pharmaceutical firms, and universities. This study shows that as the proportion of alliances with similar (biotechnology) firms (horizontal) than pharmaceutical companies and universities (vertical) increases in the alliance portfolio, the likelihood of project termination will also increase.

Finally, in addition to the number and type of alliances, we show that alliance scope can also influence the project outcomes. Firms can form alliances with different scopes of collaborative activities (one or more terms such as co-development, research, manufacturing, and marketing). Our results show that as the average number of these terms in a project-based alliance portfolio increases, there will be a higher likelihood of project failure.

**Key Contributions**

The literature of marketing (specifically, management of innovation and NPD) has mainly focused on the firm innovation performance, overlooking the performance of NPD projects under development during the NPD process. This research benefits from a multifaceted data-collection approach that helps shed light on the topic by opening this Blackbox (the NPD process) and focusing on the project performance.

This study contributes to the existing knowledge by linking NPD project management and alliance portfolio literature to explain better the variation between the termination likelihood of projects under development. We add to the literature of marketing (single- and multi-partner
NPD projects) by pinpointing effective alliance portfolio management strategies to decrease the likelihood of project failure, thereby optimizing R&D expense in new product development process.

This study assists firms in creating and maintaining competitive advantage through understanding the factors that influence the termination rate of projects in their pipeline. In particular, this study provides firms with a systematic decision-making process by understanding how different compositions and characteristics of alliance portfolio (size, partnership type, governance structure, and scope) formed on a project (by the focal developer) influence the likelihood of NPD project termination.
Branding, Innovation and the 4Ps
BRAND AUTHENTICITY IN A PANDEMIC CONTEXT: TRANSPARENCY, PROXIMITY AND SOLIDARITY

Statement of Key Contributions

This research contributes to the authenticity literature and more specifically to the constructivist perspective on authenticity, which is context and individual-dependent (Morhart et al. 2015). Although we’ve known for some time that authenticity perceptions vary depending on the situation (Beverland and Farrelly 2010), this study sheds new light on consumers’ quest for authenticity in an unexplored and unprecedented context, the COVID-19 pandemic. It further enriches the branding literature and informs the growing need for contemporary brands to remain relevant and adaptable (Guèvremont, Durif, and Grappe 2020). In addition to academic contributions, this research provides valuable insight for firms aiming to connect with consumers through authenticity. More specifically, it provides three key pillars of authenticity in uncertain times: transparency, kindness and proximity. It is therefore crucial for companies to address their consumers in an honest and direct way, i.e., transparency, while also expressing compassion and sensitivity, i.e., kindness, especially in the current context. The results also show that brands recognized as authentic have struck a balance between reassuring consumers on the one hand and supporting them on the other. This is an important lesson for today's businesses, which need to be both competent and caring (Aaker, Garbinsky and Vohs 2021). In addition, this research offers insights relating to local purchasing. Local businesses need to capitalize on this vector of authenticity in the eyes of consumers. Our results are likely to be of interest to organizations dedicated to responsible consumption and governments wishing to maximize local purchasing and support companies in their communications to this effect. This perspective is essential considering the positive economic impact of local purchasing (Winfree and Watson 2017).

Extended Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the lives of people around the world on many levels, including consumer habits (Grashuis, Skevas, and Segovia 2020; Laato et al. 2020; Sheth 2020) and consumer relationships with brands (Knowles et al. 2020). Brands have had to adjust their actions and communications in search of the appropriate discourse and response in this context of instability (Sobande 2020). A number of them have tried to set themselves apart by exhibiting authenticity (Alemany 2020; Nardone 2020). While it is widely recognized that consumers look for authenticity in brands and products (Cinelli and LeBoeuf 2020), the context of insecurity and uncertainty has further heightened this concern (Gramling 2020). Against this background—and from a constructivist perspective, based on which representations of authenticity can vary according context and viewer (Morhart et al. 2015)—, this research aims to identity the main authenticity dimensions that brands have communicated during the pandemic. A series of weekly surveys conducted during the first 10 weeks of the pandemic (n = 5,000) collected spontaneous consumer references to brands that stood out for their authenticity during the crisis. But in
what way did these brands communicate authenticity to consumers? What dimensions of perceived authenticity did consumers note? A content analysis of communications put out by brands that were deemed authentic reveals the presence of three pillars of authenticity in times of crisis: transparency, kindness and proximity.

Theoretical Background

Consumers’ quest for authenticity. The demand for authenticity is a fundamental trend in consumer lives (Beverland and Farrelly 2010; Grayson and Martinec 2004). Claims of authenticity resonate with consumers who look for the real and genuine. Brands perceived as authentic help consumers to resist the commercialization of the consumer world and achieve a sense of meaning (Grayson and Martinec 2004; Holt 2002). Interestingly, consumers’ need for authenticity depends on the individual and the context (Guèvremont and Grohmann 2016). For example, consumers who experience disconnectedness and isolation are more likely to look for authenticity in an attempt to feel connected (Beverland and Farrelly 2010). It has been demonstrated that the ongoing pandemic generates feelings of heightened isolation (Saltzman, Hansel, and Bordnick 2020) due to the confinement and the lack of social contact (Groarke et al. 2020). In this context, authenticity appears to elicit a positive response (Alemany 2020; Beverland and Farrelly 2010; Nardone 2020).

Brand authenticity perceptions. An authentic brand is described as a brand that is perceived as being real and genuine as opposed to artificial or superficial (Alexander 2009; Gilmore and Pine 2007). It stands out for its sincerity, dependability, integrity, and commitment to heritage and community (Beverland 2006; Beverland, Lindgree, and Vink 2008; Napoli et al. 2014). Other indicate that an authentic brand is perceived as credible, transparent and longstanding (Morhart et al. 2015; Napoli et al. 2014). According to the constructivist perspective, authenticity is a social and personal construct (Grayson and Martinec, 2004; Leigh, Peters and Shelton 2006), in other words, not a quality inherent to an object, but a projection of one’s own beliefs instead (Wang 1999). This study aims to identify the elements of authenticity used by brands in the context of the pandemic.

Methodology

An online survey was conducted on a weekly basis (n=500 per week) during 10 critical weeks of the pandemic (from 15/03/20 to 24/05/20). Each week, participants were asked an open-ended question (“Which brand has been most authentic according to you since the beginning of the pandemic?”). The most frequently cited brands in the 10-week period were selected, i.e., eight brands representing various products/services (supermarkets/retailers/food-beverage/telecommunications/pharmacy/financial services). Facebook—a central communication channel for brands seeking to connect with consumers and known to influence brand image (Azar et al. 2016)—was used for data collection. During the period, all brand posts pertaining to the eight brands were perused; posts communicating any form of authenticity were selected and coded by two authors. Content analysis identified the central dimensions behind perceptions of authenticity. The literature on authenticity was referred to throughout the coding process (Strauss and Corbin 1998).
Results

A total of 343 brand statements were analyzed, of which 198 (57.7%) related to a form of authenticity and more specifically to three dimensions: transparency (42.2% of messages), kindness (34.8%) and proximity (22.7%). First, transparency was observed through the clear sharing of information related to compliance with the instructions and measures put in place by the brand to protect customers and employees. The objective of these messages was to reassure consumers by providing detailed information about the risks and precautions taken. This authenticity dimension is in part related to the credibility studied in past research (Morhart et al. 2015) and the importance of providing truthful information (Beverland and Farrelly 2020). Second, a number of authenticity-related brand posts expressed the brand’s kindness, in particular in statements showing sincere care and support for consumers and employees in difficult times, demonstrating a form of solidarity. Authenticity can be tied to brand integrity (Morhart et al. 2015) and genuineness (Napoli et al. 2014) identified in past work. Third, proximity was shown by emphasizing local activities. For example, brands stressed their roots and presence in the community with a view to creating a sense of proximity and connection to a place, as shown in past studies (Napoli et al. 2014). Table 1 presents authenticity-related posts pertaining to each dimension. Lastly, an exploratory analysis of the emotions communicated indicated that optimism was the main emotion (25.6%) followed by enjoyment (14.2%). This is consistent with the demonstrated role of optimism in times of crisis or during stressful events (Brassey and Kruyt 2020; Gallagher et al. 2019). Furthermore, pleasure is a way to escape hardship (Bonetti 2014).

Contributions

This research contributes to the literature on authenticity by providing a new perspective on it within the context of crisis, and to the constructivist view of authenticity (Morhart et al. 2015) is context-dependent. Our results show, among other things, that authenticity is expressed through a high level of transparency with the objective of reassuring consumers in a situation of uncertainty; conversely, consumers look for authenticity in order to recover some control in uncertain times (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010). Moreover, this research provides an initial overview of brand communications in times of crisis and the need to adopt a discourse expressing a sense of proximity and kindness.
Table 1 – Examples of authenticity-related messages and their categorization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authenticity dimension</th>
<th>Content of brand message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>The brand ensures the well-being and safety of its customers, employees and community, ensures that shelves are stocked, increases the frequency of cleaning and sanitizing, and makes the health of employees and customers a priority (Supermarket, 16/03/2020).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reassuring message from the brand to inform that their stores take all necessary precautions to ensure the safety of customers and employees. Well-being and safety are at the core of all decisions (Retailer, 20/03/2020).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindness</td>
<td>Highlights its involvement in the community and with people affected by the pandemic and communicates its contribution to the Community Emergency Fund (Financial services, 26/03/2020).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The brand commends the teams who’ve worked hard to support customers and community in stores and distribution centers as we face an unprecedented crisis. To reward its employees for their devotion, the brand has offered a $2.00 hourly wage increase (Supermarket, 21/03/2020).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communicates a message of encouragement and support to its clients by offering financial relief measures (Financial Services, 16/03/20).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity</td>
<td>The brand takes part in the #ACHATLOCAL movement and promotes other local businesses (Food-beverage, 31/03/2020).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The brand highlights the fact that it helps local farmers and businesses to sell their products and stresses the importance of supporting local businesses during the crisis (Supermarket, 10/04/2020).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


BRAND STRUCTURE AND EXTENSION TYPICALITY EFFECTS ON THE DIAGNOSTICITY OF NEGATIVE EXTENSION INFORMATION

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Keywords: cue-diagnosticity; brand diversity; brand similarity; extension typicality; cue-validity index; perceived probability of occurrence

Description: capitalizing on the cue-diagnosticity theory, this study examined the influences of extension typicality and brand structure (i.e., brand diversity and similarity) on the diagnosticity of negative extension information.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Questions

Extant research in adverse extension effects has documented that typical and atypical extension information exerts asymmetrical adverse effects on parent brand evaluations. Specifically, negative information about typical extensions is a diagnostic cue yielding more salient impacts than negative information about atypical extensions on brand evaluations. However, the research scope has been limited to the perceived fit or typicality of brand extensions. Extant research has proven that brand structures (i.e., category similarity and quality diversity) moderate adverse effect, which infers that extension diagnosticity is likely to be a function of brand structure and moderates subsequent adverse extension effects consequently. While considerable research has been conducted on adverse extension effects, there has been surprisingly little discussion concerning the influences of brand structures on adverse extension effects. Therefore, this study
attempts to advance the research scope by examining the impacts of brand structure, coupled with extension typicality, upon adverse extension effects based on the cue-diagnosticity theory.

**Method and Data**

Overall, 179 U.S. residents participated in the study with a 2 (extension typicality: high vs. low) x 2 (brand diversity: low vs. high) x 2 (brand similarity: high and low) three-factor mixed design. In which, extension typicality and brand diversity were between-subjects factors and brand similarity was a within-subjects factor. The probability of launching an unfavorable typical or atypical extension is represented by the production of the probability of the capability to launch a typical or atypical extension and the probability to launch a low-quality extension represents. The raw score of probability was then standardized to represent the cue-validity index (CVI). Further, the diagnosticity of extension information was formulated by contrasting cue-validity indices and represented by the power of the cue-diagnosticity index (PCDI).

**Summary of Findings**

The results revealed that, for typical extensions, negative typical extension information is not a diagnostic cue for the adverse effects of unfavorable typical extension on high-diversity narrow and broad brands. Contrarily, negative typical extension information is a diagnostic cue for the adverse effects of unfavorable typical extensions on low-diversity narrow and broad brands. For atypical extensions, negative atypical extension information is a diagnostic cue for the adverse effects of unfavorable atypical extensions on high-diversity narrow and broad brands. Contrarily, negative atypical extension information is a diagnostic cue for the adverse effects of unfavorable atypical extensions on low-diversity narrow and broad brands. The findings suggest that
unfavorable typical extension information will exert identical negative impacts on high-diversity narrow and broad brands, but exert more negative impacts on low-diversity broad brands than on low-diversity narrow brands. Additionally, unfavorable atypical extension information will exert more negative impacts on high-diversity broad brands than on high-diversity narrow brands and exert more negative impacts on low-diversity narrow brands than on low-diversity broad brands.

**Key Contributions**

Extant research into adverse extension effects has limited its discussion to the influence of extension typicality on the diagnosticity of negative extension information. This study advances the scope of the extant research by examining the joint impacts of brand similarity, brand diversity, and extension typicality upon the diagnosticity of negative extension information. The research findings are cutting-edge, which provide researchers and managers with a more holistic understanding about the impacts of brand structure and extension typicality on the diagnosticity of negative extension information and adverse extension effects.

(References are available upon request)
COMPETITIVE PAPER

Consumer’s perceptions towards a luxury brand: a comparative evaluation between brand love and brand engagement

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Abstract

Brand love and brand engagement are two important concepts in marketing academia that influence several dimensions of consumer’s relationship with a brand. This study aims to verify (i) if these two concepts can be used as similar in a conceptual model that explain the antecedents and consequences of brand love and brand engagement, (ii) understand the influence of sense of community, brand equity and brand identification on brand love and brand engagement, and (iii) the effect of brand love and brand engagement on consumer’s brand loyalty, willingness to pay a premium price and positive word-of-mouth. Data was gathered using a self-administered survey, answered by 170 respondents considering the consumption of accessories of a well-known luxury brand. Two rival models were developed and tested using partial least squares-structural equation modelling. Findings show differences between the antecedents influence on brand love and brand engagement, as well as the effect of these on consumer’s brand loyalty, willingness to pay a premium price and positive word-of-mouth, however, the two models do not show statistic differences.

Statement of Key Contributions

To identify how to develop a strong consumer-brand relationship, academic literature has emphasized the emotional aspects. This research investigated the antecedents (sense of community, brand equity and brand identification) and consequences (brand loyalty, willingness to pay a premium price and positive word-of-mouth) of brand love and consumer-brand engagement considering that both concepts can be understood as
substitutes. This research builds on prior research by taking constructs that had previously been studied independently and showing that although differences were found on path level considering the influence of sense of community, brand equity and brand identification on brand love and brand engagement and the effect of these on the outcome variables, both models are useful to explain consumer-brand relationships. Although, some scholars have investigated the relationship between brand love and consumer-brand engagement nobody has studied whether both concepts can be understood as substitutes. This research aims to fulfil this gap. This study advances knowledge about consumer-brand relationships theory by showing that, for luxury accessories, the relationship can be built either through brand love or brand engagement. This study suggests that brand managers should pay special attention to promote a sense of community and brand identification among buyers and users of their brand since it will have an advantage on increasing brand love and brand engagement.
Introduction

Several constructs of consumer-brand relationship theories have received considerable attention from both academy and business since the recognition of the roles that contribute to building the brand relationship led to brand success (Gumparthi & Patra, 2020). Brand love is a well-known marketing construct that applies to products with a major hedonic component. The studies that exist on brand love indicate that it has an important influence on several marketing variables like brand loyalty, premium price and positive word of mouth (Batra, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi, 2012). However, its interest arises not only as a concept on its own but also as a dimension within other concepts, such as the relationship of brand quality and emotional connection (Albert, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2009), brand attachment (Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli, & Friedmann, 2009), consumer devotion (Pichler & Hemetsberger, 2008), brand commitment (Rossiter & Bellman, 2012) and brand connection (Pitta & Franzak, 2008). This construct offers a subtle understanding of the different facets of the other brand-related constructs, many of them related to social identification and consistency of the self-image (Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Park, Macinnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010).

Brand engagement can be understood as a positively-valenced rational process with affective and emotional components that facilitates behavioral activations and brand interactions (Hollebeek, Glynn, & Brodie, 2014). It is also associated with consumers’ positive responses (Tran, Muldrow, & Ho, 2020). Consumer-brand engagement increases brand loyalty and leads to an increase in sales, profitability, cost reduction and favorable word-of-mouth (Hollebeek et al., 2014). The same occurs with brand love (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Some scholars have investigated the relationship between brand love and consumer-brand engagement (Gómez-Suárez, Martínez-Ruiz, & Martínez-Caraballo, 2017; Langner, Bruns, Fischer, & Rossiter, 2016; Sarkar & S, 2014; Vernuccio, Pagani, Barbarossa, & Pastore, 2015), however, nobody has studied whether both concepts can be understood as substitutes. This research aims to fill this gap. When consumers buy luxury brands, most of the times, they expect to achieve status and enhance self-esteem (Nuño & Quelch, 1998; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004), and are willing to pay premium prices as long as these brands are able to provide exclusivity or rarity (Tynan, McKechnie, & Chhuon, 2010). Considering our modern society and the contribution of luxury objects to support individual social integration, it is important to understand how consumers of luxury fashion products engage with their brands. Thus, the choice of a luxury brand was
motivated by the necessity of delineating the potential drivers that contribute to consumer’s establishment of an emotional relationship and analyze the outcomes.

Conceptual Background

One of the first academic that contribute to the thought of the consumer-brand relationships process was Bowlby (1979), who observed that individual beings tend to be more loyal to what they feel connected with, attached to, engaged to and have love for.

Fournier (1998), in her research on consumer-brand relationships, recognized the importance of love as one of the key facets in building long-term consumer-brand relationships. Carroll and Ahuvia (2006), contributed to the advance of brand love construct by providing a quantitative perspective through the assessment of consumers’ level of satisfaction considering their emotional attachment to brands, and by enabling an understanding of post-consumption behavior (brand loyalty, positive word-of-mouth).

Since the beginning, the brand love construct was considered similar to interpersonal love (Ahuvia, 2005; Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Lastovicka & Sirianni, 2011; Shimp & Madden, 1988) which was criticized by several researchers (Albert, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2008; Batra et al., 2012). A few studies looked at brand love through para-social relationship lenses (Fetscherin, 2014). The result of Batra et al. (2012) works suggest that the interpersonal theory of love used to construct measures of brand love omits some important variables and include other unnecessary. Gumparthi and Patra (2020, p. 95) consider brand love as “a construct that describes the passionate feelings and emotional attachment that satisfied consumers have for brands”.

Brand engagement presumes that consumers wish to invest time, energy, money, or other resources, beyond those already invested in the purchase or consumption (Keller, 2003). Similar to brand love, brand engagement is also related to the attachment theory since consumers differ on their will to include important brands as part of their self-concepts (Sprott, Czellar, & Spangenberg, 2009), and the consumer-brand relationships (Fournier, 1998; Loureiro, Ruediger, & Demetris, 2012). Furthermore, the concept of brand engagement explains why consumers interact and select brands (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014). The academic literature defined brand engagement as a mental activation process of a consumer towards a brand and considers it a self-concept indicating the variable tendency of consumers to include brands in their self-concept (Goldsmith, Flynn, Goldsmith, & Stacey, 2010; Sprott et al., 2009). Several authors (Brodie, Ilic, Juric, &
Hollebeek, 2013; Hollebeek, 2011; Flynn, Goldsmith & Kim, 2013) showed that brand engagement influences consumer’s motivation for buying and helps to develop loyalty towards the brand. It also influences consumer’s dissemination of positive WOM (Goldsmith, Flynn, & Clark, 2011).

According to Carroll and Ahuvia (2006), the beloved objects require energy and time, which implies that those who show a higher propensity for brand engagement, will be those who love an object or brand. It is also possible to suggest that increasing consumer’s love and engagement with a brand will favour companies’ performance results such as sales growth, brand referrals, consumers will be more involved in co-creation processes and elicit high profitability (Bijmolt et al., 2010; Sawhney, Verona, & Prandelli, 2005).

The analysis of several works highlights that both brand love and brand engagement present common antecedents like brand experience (Ahn & Back, 2018; Bıçakçıoğlu, İpek, & Bayraktaroğlu, 2018), or self-brand image congruity (Bıçakçıoğlu et al., 2018; Loureiro, Gorgus, & Kaufmann, 2017), and outcomes such as brand loyalty and positive word-of-mouth (Bairrada, Coelho, & Coelho, 2018; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Nyadzayo, Johnson, & Rossi, 2020; Solem & Pedersen, 2016). Thus, constructs of brand engagement and brand love can be used to explain the same type of consumer behavior. Then, if the backgrounds of these two constructs are identical their use will be indifferent.

This research purposes two alternative models to empirically evaluate the consumer’s relationship. One model considers the sense of community, brand equity and brand identity as antecedents of brand love leading, in turn, to consumers to have certain behaviors, particularly in terms of brand loyalty, willing to pay a premium price and positive WOM (Model A). Using brand engagement as another construct of emotional consumer brand relationships, the authors suggest that the sense of community, brand equity and brand identification as antecedents of brand engagement leading to brand loyalty, willing to pay a premium price and positive WOM (Model B). Consequently, model A will be compared with the rival model B. Since that, we posit the following hypothesis:

$$H_1: \text{Brand love and brand engagement are identical to explain the consumer brand relationship of luxury brand.}$$

Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010) consider that sense of community is an antecedent of brand love. The sense of community is an element antecedent of brand love and can be
defined as the affiliation that a consumer feels with other people associated with the brand (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999). McMillian and Chavis (1986) were among the first to work with the concept of sense of community. For this authors, sense of community describes the feelings of the members, their identity, and belonging to a group. Keller (2003) also consider sense of community as the association that a consumer feels about the other consumers of the same brand. This construct is similar to the self-categorization dimension of social identity. The social identity theory as a critical component: the feeling of belonging. Then, the similarity between sense of community and social identity suggests that might also apply to the relationship between sense of community and brand love (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010) and brand engagement (Lee & Hsieh, 2021; Zhang, Kandampully, & Bilgihan, 2015). Thus, we propose the following hypotheses:

\[ H_2a: \text{Sense of community (SC) influences brand love (BL) positively.} \]
\[ H_2b: \text{Sense of community (SC) influences brand engagement (BE) positively.} \]

Recent studies show that brand equity usually refers to the value that consumers perceive or attach to the brand (Hakala, Svensson, & Vincze, 2012). Since brand equity is more related to attributes and the benefits are necessary to guarantee the development of strong affective appraisal by the consumer, brand equity should be a necessary condition for developing brand love (Filho et al., 2010). Zhou, Mou, Su, and Jim Wu (2020) in their study about how personal brand can promote consumers’ brand love, consider brand equity as an antecedent of brand love. Filho, Monteiro, and Souki (2010) highlight that both brand love and brand equity are fundamental in creating strong consumer relationships with a firm. The authors suggest that the literature has been scarce on clarifying the relationship between these constructs. Some advocate that brand equity might be necessary for developing brand love, while others suggest that brand love should precede brand equity. Findings showed acceptable nomological validity for both models with brand love explaining 59% of the variance and brand equity 54%. Both concepts are strong antecedents of behavioral outcomes such as loyalty and buying intention. As we speculate that brand love and brand engagement can be used interchangeable to explain consumer-brand relationship in accessories luxury brands, it is expected that brand equity explains brand engagement. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:
H3a: Brand equity (BEq) influences brand love (BL) positively.
H3b: Brand equity (BEq) influences brand engagement (BE) positively.

Individuals, who identify strongly with the objects they love, reflect an important function of brand love who is expressing their existing identities and improve desired identities (Belk, 1988; Escalas & Bettman, 2005). This brand identity occurs either through direct consumer relationship with the beloved brand or by enhancing the interpersonal relationship (McAlexander, Koenig, & Schouten, 2005). Ahuvia (2005) also argues that loved objects have a strong impact on determining individual self-concept. According to Algesheimer, Dholakia, and Herrmann (2005), brand identification occurs when individuals overlap personal image with the brand image to express their personal identity. Brand identification has been recognized as an antecedent of brand love (Roy, Khandeparkar, & Motiani, 2016). Freitas and Almeida (2017) investigated consumer engagement in the context of brand communities proposing brand identification and participation in brand communities as antecedents of brand engagement. As consumer’s as the level of identification with the community increases so does community brand engagement. On the other hand, as Tran, Lin, Baalbaki, and Guzman (2020) defend, the relationship between a consumer and a brand derives from congruity between one’s self-concept and the brand’s ability to communicate benefits fulfilling the consumer’s self-concept. Those from whose self-concepts hold those values will find themselves forming a stronger engagement or love with that brand than with a competitor’s brand (Tran et al., 2020). Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4a: Brand identification (BI) influences brand love (BL) positively.
H4b: Brand identification (BI) influences brand engagement (BE) positively.

Several authors conclude that the most desirable outcome of marketing strategy is to transform their consumers into loyal ones (Odin, Odin, & Valette-Florence, 2001). One of the most common consequences of loyalty is that consumers are less sensitive to price increases, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the marketing tools and, generally, improving the business performance and results (Kabiraj & Shanmugan, 2011; Oliver, 1999). Previous studies have illustrated that brand love predicts brand loyalty (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 2019). Several
authors also suggest that brand engagement positively affect brand loyalty (Brodie et al., 2013; Hollebeek, 2011). Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

\( H_{5a}: \text{Brand love (BL) influences brand loyalty (BLOY) positively.} \)
\( H_{5b}: \text{Brand engagement (BE) influences brand loyalty (BLOY) positively.} \)

The premium price has been studied by several authors in the brand literature, such as Park and Srinivasan (1994) and Netemeyer et al. (2004). In terms of marketing, it can be considered that the willingness of a consumer to pay a premium price is defined as the amount that he is willing to pay for his preferred brand when compared to a similar product of another brand (or unbranded). Brand love and brand engagement is expected to leave consumers willing to pay a premium price for their preferred brands (Karjaluoto, Munnukka, & Kiuru, 2016; Zhou et al., 2020). Thus, we propose the following hypotheses:

\( H_{6a}: \text{Brand love (BL) influences consumers’ willingness to pay a premium price (PP) positively.} \)
\( H_{6b}: \text{Brand engagement (BE) influences consumers’ willingness to pay a premium price (PP) positively.} \)

The love feeling is linked to a lot of different behaviours, emotions or feeling in the interpersonal relationship literature. In a consumption context, Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) demonstrate a positive direct effect of brand love on word of mouth. Several characteristics of passion could explain its link with positive word of mouth. Furthermore, when a consumer is engaged with a brand it means that exists an emotional attachment (Keller, 2001) and, in turn, this leads to consumption, loyalty and positive word-of-mouth (Goldsmith et al., 2011).

\( H_{7a}: \text{Brand love (BL) influences word-of-mouth (WOM) positively.} \)
\( H_{7b}: \text{Brand engagement (BE) influences word-of-mouth (WOM) positively.} \)

3. Methods
Considering the strategic brand management, it is possible to distinguish the functional, symbolic and experience brand concepts. Luxury brands can be considered as symbolic brands. This research purposes two alternative models to empirically evaluate the consumer-brand relationship in a well know luxury brand – Armani. This research focuses on accessories of Armani brand and supports Gumparthi and Patra (2020) systematic literature review on brand love that shows the need for more research across all the product categories. To test the research hypotheses, it was employed the PLS approach (SmartPLS 3.0), following two steps: (i) analysis of the adequacy of the measurements (item and construct reliability, convergent and discriminant validity), the analysis of the parameter estimates of indicator weights, the significance of each weight, and multicollinearity; and (ii) assessment of the structural results (Hulland, 1999).

**Data and Questionnaire**

An online survey was adopted to describe and interpret the relationships among existence variables. Data were collected between June and July of 2019, through a convenience sample of Portuguese consumers that were invited to give their opinion about Armani accessories. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. The questionnaire had two parts: the first part of the questionnaire was constituted by a set of items corresponding to the sample description, and the second part had 36 mandatory questions based on multi-item scales previously established in the literature to measure the constructs of the proposed conceptual models. In the first part of the survey, there was a question asking whether the individual had ever purchased an accessory from Armani brand. If the answered was no, the survey is finish. A final sample of 170 valid responses were received. Of the 170 consumers who were analysed, 42.9% are aged between 36 to 50 years, 57.1% were male, 63.5% were married, 40% of respondents earn more than 3000 euros per month, and 28.2% between 2001-3000 euros, 83.5% belongs to a family of 2-5 individuals, and 84.7 % have higher education.

**Measures**

Several validate scales have been used to measure sense of community and brand identification (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010), brand equity (Yoo, Donthu, & Lee, 2000), brand love (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), brand engagement (Sprott et al., 2009), brand loyalty (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996), premium price (Netemeyer et al., 2004)
and positive WOM (Tuškej, Golob, & Podnar, 2013). All the items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from “it is not important at all” to “it is very important”.

4. Results

Measurement Model

PLS-SEM is a robust modeling technique, with few identification issues and well-suited for assessing complex predictive models and testing the strength of relationships between latent variables (Hair, Black, Anderson, & Babin, 2018). Composite measures of identified factors are unidimensional and demonstrate good scale reliability according to accepted standards (Nunnally, 1978). Item reliability is examined through the item loadings of scales measuring reflective constructs, the item loading of each item in the current study is equal to or higher than 0.704 (Wetzels, Odekerken-Schröder, & van Oppen, 2009). All factors show strong Cronbach’s alpha, over 0.7 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), and the construct validities of the latent constructs are evaluated by convergent validity. The average variance extracted (AVE) provides evidence of overall convergent validity of each construct as it indicates the amount of variance explained by the construct relative to the amount of variance that may be attributed to measurement error, and should exceed 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). All factor loadings for indicators measuring the same construct are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), demonstrating high convergent validity.

The degree of multicollinearity was assessed by the variance inflation factor (VIF) and a full collinearity test was performed. Results show that all factor-level VIFs are lower than 3.3, meaning the model can be considered free of common method bias (Kock, 2015). Discriminant validity was assessed through the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) due to its superior performance compared to more traditional methods (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). All HTMT criteria are below 0.9 establishing discriminant validity for both models.

Structural Model and Hypotheses Test

The structural models A and B were estimated through a bootstrap resampling tool to determine path significances. Results for model A (Figure 1) indicate that all paths are statistically significant with the structural model explaining 61.7% of the variance in brand loyalty, 43.6% of the variance in premium price, and 49.4% in positive word of
Findings provide support for all hypotheses, sense of community is positively related to brand love ($\beta = 0.347, p < 0.001$), brand equity has a positive influence on brand love ($\beta = 0.333, p < 0.001$), and brand identification has a positive influence on brand love ($\beta = 0.216, p < 0.01$). On the other hand, brand love influences consumer’s loyal behavior ($\beta = 0.786, p < 0.001$), it shows that consumers are willing to pay a higher price for the brand ($\beta = 0.661, p < 0.001$), and influences positive word-of-mouth ($\beta = 0.704, p < 0.001$).

**Figure 1.** Structural model A

Results for the rival model (Figure 2), indicate that all paths are statistically significant with the structural model explaining 26.1% of the variance in brand loyalty, 22.1% of the variance in premium price, and 23.7% in positive word of mouth. Findings show that sense of community and brand identification have a positive influence on brand engagement ($\beta = 0.290, p < 0.001$ and $\beta = 0.273, p < 0.01$, respectively) supporting $H_{3b}$ and $H_{4b}$. Findings also show that brand engagement leads to consumers’ loyal behavior ($\beta = 0.511, p < 0.001$), it shows that consumers are willing to pay a higher price for the brand ($\beta = 0.470, p < 0.001$) and influences positive word-of-mouth ($\beta = 0.486, p < 0.001$) supporting $H_{5b}$, $H_{6b}$, and $H_{7b}$. However, the positive effect of brand equity on brand
engagement was not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.094, p > 0.05$) and $H_{3b}$ was not supported.

**Figure 2.** Structural model B

Finally, the $\chi^2$ difference 41.123 with the difference in df = 66 was statistically no significant (p-value = 0.993), thus, the results provide evidence of brand love and brand engagement can be understanding as similar in consumer-brand relationship, supporting $H_1$.

5. **Discussion**

As Gumparthi and Patra (2020) highlighted brand love is a phenomenon of great importance since a group of satisfied consumers become loyal customers and companies should consider the benefits of this relationship by developing personalized marketing activities. Another consequence is the reduction of several costs, such as switching costs, less availability to try products from competing brands, etc. Yet, when a consumer is engaged with a brand it means that exists an emotional attachment (Keller, 2001) and, in turn, this leads to consumption, loyalty and positive WOM (Goldsmith et al., 2011).
Results show that makes sense to separate the antecedents of the consequences of brand love, and except for the influence of brand equity on brand engagement, all the hypothesized relationships were supported. It also shows that brand equity is a construct that should be considered when analyzing brand love, supporting the work developed by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) and Filho et al. (2010). The perception that consumers have of brand equity can lead to an increased love for the brand. Moreover, it appears that with respect to consumer relationship with the Armani brand, the brand engagement antecedents’ factors are not the same as the brand love. The brand equity is not explanatory of brand engagement in the case of the Armani brand.

Another interesting result respects the highest values obtained for consumer-brand relationship model in the case of model A, being in agreement with Albert et al. (2009) findings which showed the link between brand love and positive word of mouth, brand affection to trust and loyalty. Thus, in order to explain the consumer-brand relationship, in the case of luxury fashion accessories, it is preferable to use brand love over brand engagement, although there are no statistically significant differences.

6. Conclusions, theoretical and managerial implications

This paper aimed to contribute to the understanding of the complex consumer-brand relationships by purposing two alternative models to empirically evaluate this relationship considering a specific product category of a well-known luxury brand. Thus, our study builds on prior research by taking constructs that had previously been studied independently and showing that although differences were found on path level considering the influence of sense of community, brand equity and brand identification on brand love and brand engagement and the effect of these on the outcome variables, both models are useful to explain consumer-brand relationships. The results of the current study show that the two emotional relationships constructs have a positive influence on consumer’s loyalty, the willingness to pay a premium price and the dissemination of positive word-of-mouth. Specifically, results indicate that sense of community and brand identification are antecedents of brand love and brand engagement.

Theoretically, this study offers an important contribution to the consumer-brand theory by empirically evaluating two models and showing that for luxury accessories, the relationship can be built either through brand love or brand engagement. It also offers a comprehensive analysis of the antecedents and consequences of brand love and brand engagement, explaining the specific effects of sense of community, brand equity and
brand identification on brand love and brand engagement, and the effect of brand love and brand engagement on consumer’s brand loyalty, willingness to pay a premium price and positive word-of-mouth.

From a managerial point of view, this study suggests that brand managers should pay special attention to promote a sense of community and brand identification among buyers and users of their brand, since it will have an advantage on increasing brand love and engagement. Besides, consumer’s brand identification means there is a positive association between the consumer and the brand, and if companies nurture this relation by promoting personalize experiences that make every customer feel unique, this, in turn, will generate positive WOM and brand loyalty. Additionally, companies’ managers should try to clearly state and properly communicate brand values and analyze if those are understood by their customers and users.

7. Limitations and future research

Despite the contributions of this study, we recognize some limitations that offer opportunities for future research. Although the sample was adequate for the purposes of this research, we used a convenience sampling. Additionally, this study analyzed consumer’s perceptions about the accessories of a single luxury brand. Futures studies should include other luxury brands and see if there are any differences between the relationship between the antecedents and outcomes of brand love and brand engagement. Since brand love should not be seen as stationary but rather as continually evolving (Palusuk, Koles, & Hasan, 2019), it would also be interesting to study the differential effect of brand love and brand engagement on the selected outcome variables considering more or less symbolic brands as well as the influence of reference groups as a source of brand meaning.

Another avenue for further research it would be to adopt a longitudinal perspective and conduct research that identifies the evolution on the consumer-brand relationship, by exploring the dynamics between brand love, brand engagement and co-creation. More specifically, it would be interesting to analyze how this relationship influences consumer’s willingness to pay premium prices, brand loyalty, communicate the brand values, positive WOM and brand addiction.

Acknowledgment
References


Joint Moderating Effects of Innovation Radicalness and Lead Userness on Customer Participation in Different Stages on New Product Development Performance

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Keywords: Customer participation, Innovation radicalness, Lead userness, New product performance

Description: The joint moderating effects of innovation radicalness and lead userness for the relationship between customer participation and NPD performance
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Previous research on customer participation in the new product development (NPD) process suggests that we need to understand the conditions under which customer participation leads to successful innovations. Although firms generally consider their customers as an important external resource in the NPD process to obtain needs- or solution-related knowledge, there are still gaps in which contingency factors influence successful integration of customer participation on NPD performance in the literature. Specifically, little research has been conducted into understanding the joint moderating effects of different customer characteristics (i.e., lead userness) in the relationship between customer participation and NPD performance while considering the level of innovation radicalness across different NPD stages.

The inconsistency in current research about the effect of customer participation on NPD performance implies the need to understand the conditions under which customer participation is more beneficial to NPD outcomes. The questions this research addresses are as follows: (1) Will the impact of customer participation on NPD performance across different NPD stages vary by innovation radicalness?, (2) If so, will the impact of customer participation in each NPD stage on NPD performance differ by customer characteristics (lead userness) jointly with innovation radicalness? These questions are addressed using the survey method.
**Method and Data**

Survey data were collected to test six hypotheses. The data were gathered from a panel of qualified North American NPD employees. A total of 3402 NPD employees were approached to answer the survey questions, from which 272 responded, thus a response rate of 8%. After checking the reliability and validity of the measurement and common method bias, our hypotheses were tested using a stepwise regression model with mean-centered predictors for all variables.

**Summary of Findings**

First, there was a negative joint moderating effect of lead useriness on the moderating effects of innovation radicalness on the link between customer participation and NPD performance at the ideation stage of the NPD process. Second, there was a negative moderating effect of innovation radicalness on the effect of customer participation on NPD performance in the development stage. Third, there was a negative joint moderating effect of lead useriness for the moderating effect of innovation radicalness in the customer participation-NPD performance relationship in the development stage. Finally, there was a positive moderating effect of innovation radicalness regarding the effect of customer participation on NPD performance in the launch stage.

**Key Contributions**

First, this study provides insights into the moderating effects of innovation radicalness on the relationship between customer participation and NPD performance. The results show that the impact of customer participation varies by innovation radicalness.
radicalness at each NPD stage. Specifically, the relationship between customer participation and NPD performance in the development stage is more negative when innovation radicalness is high. However, the impact of customer participation in the launch stage has a strong positive relationship on NPD performance when there is high innovation radicalness.

Second, this study provides a better understanding of customer participation and innovation radicalness on NPD performance in conjunction with the customers’ lead userness by the NPD stage. Lead userness may have joint moderating effects with the levels of innovation radicalness on the relationship between customer participation and NPD performance. Specifically, in the ideation stage, when the involved customers have a high level of lead userness, the moderating effect of innovation radicalness on the customer participation-NPD performance relationship is more negative. In contrast, in the development stage, when the involved customers have a low level of lead userness, there is a positive moderating effect of innovation radicalness for the relationship is more positive.

References are available upon request.
MARKET SELECTION AND PRODUCT POSITIONING DECISIONS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR SHORT- AND LONG-TERM PERFORMANCE

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KEYWORDS

Launch Strategy; Market Selection; Music Industry; Product Performance; Product Positioning

DESCRIPTION

With over 60 years of data on the Music Industry in the United States, the implications of market selection and product positioning decisions on short- and long-term product performance outcomes are empirically investigated.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question
A fundamental pair of questions for firms to consider when approaching a particular industry are: which market subcategories to enter; and, how to position products successfully within those entered markets. The attractiveness of certain market subcategories may fluctuate over time. For example, in the context of the automobile industry, sedans still constitute a large number of units sold, despite declining share. And even through the growing prominence of SUVs, station wagons still are sold by numerous firms including BMW and Subaru. Within and across these market subcategories, firms must carefully position their products to maximize performance. Given this context, our research addresses several specific lines of questioning. How does market subcategory selection criteria (size, competitiveness, age) impact product performance? Are short- and long-run performance outcomes identical? What if the product is positioned away from the market center (niche), spans multiple subcategories, and/or is a brand collaboration?

Method and Data
We use the U.S. Music Industry (a.k.a. product category) from 1958 to 2019 to empirically test our hypotheses: genres (rock, blues, etc.) correspond to subcategories; artists to brands; and songs to products. The raw data are available at the product(i)-week(j) aggregation level. In producing a cross-sectional analysis set from initial data that had repeated time measures for products (i.e., songs appear on Billboard in multiple weeks), brand and subcategory information has been tied to the focal product’s first week on Billboard, as this best approximates market conditions near product launch. The final sample includes 21,508 complete observations. Regression analysis is utilized to model the data.
Summary of Findings

We report a complex set of nuanced findings, with the key factors driving short-term success differently, and frequently in opposing ways, than long-term success. Interestingly, products launched into larger product subcategories experience stronger short-run performance, but weaker long-run performance. Following the most popular subcategory trends risks product longevity. Competitive market conditions are associated with lower typical short-run product success – as expected. However, products launched into competitive markets enjoy elevated long-term success, as nostalgia effects may drive more recall of a time when a certain group of subcategories dominated the industry. Both entirely new and well-established older market subcategories are more attractive than moderately aged ones for obtaining long-term product success. Market niching, or positioning the product away from the market center, significantly improves long-run performance. Spanning multiple market subcategories with one product is associated with greater short-run, but lower long-run, performance. Finally, brand collaborations are associated with higher short-run success.

Key Contributions

We contribute to both theory and practice. First, short- and long-term product success drivers are not identical. Several characteristics that improve short-term performance hinder long-term performance and vice versa. Second, firms should carefully consider how market selection (size, competitiveness, age) and product positioning (niche, subcategory spanning, brand collaboration) decisions combine to affect objectives for short- versus long-term success.
THE EFFECT OF CUSTOMER AUTONOMY ORIENTATION IN BRAND VALUE CO-CREATION

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Keywords: autonomy orientation, customer brand engagement, customer-initiated co-creation, monetary-incentivized co-creation, co-creation within customer community

Description: This research demonstrates that autonomous customers are more likely to engage with their brands especially in customer-initiated and non-incentivized co-creation situations.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Value co-creation has been considered as one of the most important topics in marketing and branding research especially since the emergence of the service dominant logic (Merz, et al., 2009; Payne, et al., 2009). On the customer side of brand value co-creation, existing research has focused on the importance of customer resources (Merz, et al., 2018). However, such research has paid little attention to what types of customers are likely to engage in brand value co-creation. Moreover, despite the diversity of contexts in which customers engage in co-creation from the perspectives of initiatives (Zwass, 2010; O’Hern and Rindfleisch, 2010), customer community (Roberts, et al., 2013), and incentives (Füller, 2010), prior research has not examined the effect of customer characteristics in these contexts. To address these research gaps, we attempt to explore what types of customers are likely to engage in brand...
value co-creation in what kinds of contexts. Specifically, we empirically test the following four hypotheses constructed based on Self-Determination Theory (SDT: Deci and Ryan, 1985; 1987; 2014).

H1: Customer autonomy orientation is positively associated with customer brand engagement.

H2: In a customer-initiated co-creation situation as compared to firm-initiated one, the positive relationship between customer autonomy orientation and customer brand engagement is stronger.

H3: In a monetary-incentivized co-creation situation as compared to non-incentivized one, the positive relationship between customer autonomy orientation and customer brand engagement is weaker.

H4: In a co-creation situation within customer community as compared to one without customer community, the positive relationship between customer autonomy orientation and customer brand engagement is stronger.

Method and Data
We collected data by conducting an online scenario experiment that was designed to test the hypotheses. A 2 (initiatives: customer-initiated vs. firm-initiated) × 2 (incentives: non-incentivized vs. monetary-incentivized) × 2 (community: within community vs. without community) factorial design created 8 different experimental scenarios in developing new product ideas. The participants were randomly assigned to one of these scenarios. They were instructed to read the scenario after answering a set of questionnaires about autonomy orientation. They were then asked to answer a series of questionnaires on customer brand engagement. Customer autonomy orientation was measured by 12 items adapted from Deci and Ryan (1985). Customer brand engagement was operationalized through 10 items adapted...
from Hollebeek, et al. (2014). Reliabilities, convergent validities, and discriminant validity for all items and constructs were confirmed.

Summary of Findings

We conducted SEM and multigroup SEMs. In the results of the SEM (integrated sample) conducted to test H1, the standardized coefficient between customer autonomy orientation and customer brand engagement was positive and statistically significant (std.β=0.646, p<0.01). This result indicates that autonomous customers are likely to engage with their brands. Then, multigroup SEMs were conducted on the same structural model, in which samples were split into two different groups in terms of three co-creation situations. First, for co-creation initiatives, the difference in the path coefficients was positive and statistically significant (diff.=0.133, p<0.10). These results empirically support H2 and imply that autonomous customers are more likely to engage with their brands in a customer-initiated co-creation situation than in a firm-initiated one. Second, for co-creation incentives, the difference in the path coefficients was negative and statistically significant (diff.=-0.149, p<0.10). These results empirically support H3 and imply that autonomous customers are more likely to engage with their brands in a non-incentivized co-creation situation than in a monetary incentivized one. Finally, for customer community, the difference in the path coefficients was negative contrary to the prediction in H4 but not statistically significant (diff.=-0.080, p>0.10). These results do not empirically support H4.

Statement of Key Contributions

This research makes two important contributions to the brand value co-creation literature. First, while the current literature has paid little attention to what psychological types of customers are likely to co-create with their brand, our research sheds light on the important
role of customer autonomy orientation in brand value co-creation by adopting the Self-Determination Theory. Our findings show that autonomous customers are more likely to engage with their brands. Second, this research theoretically and empirically identifies the situations in which autonomous customers are more likely to co-create. In customer-initiated and non-incentivized co-creation situations, autonomous customers are more willing to invest their own resources in specific brand interactions. These findings are not only unavailable in the existing brand value co-creation research, but also help brand managers understand what kind of customers will engage with their brands and what kind of co-creation contexts can increase their customers’ engagement. First of all, they can target at highly autonomous customers to develop closer customer-brand relationship in value co-creation. Then, the co-creation context should be manipulated to enhance the brand engagement of autonomous customers. Specifically, providing more initiatives to autonomous customers may increase their brand engagement. In addition, although monetary rewards have been considered as a method to appeal customers to participate in co-creation, it seems to distract autonomous consumers. Conversely, avoiding offering monetary rewards to autonomous customers may even have a better effect on building customer-brand relationship.

References are available upon request.
TURNING A CRISIS INTO AN OPPORTUNITY –

INNOVATION DURING THE PANDEMIC

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Keywords: organizational learning; marketing strategy; innovation strategy; COVID-19 crisis; crisis management

Description: Innovation strategies and lessons of firms across countries and industry sectors, in response to the COVID-19 crisis

ABSTRACT

By relying on 23 in-depth interviews, the paper investigates innovation strategies and lessons implemented by firms across countries and a wide variety of industry sectors in response to the current COVID-19 crisis. The study provides a taxonomy of the various types of innovation responses to the existing crisis and disruption.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between facing a crisis and innovation is a controversial one. From the one hand necessity is the mother of all inventions, whereby an economic crisis can provide an opportunity for companies, industries and entire nations to restructure productive facilities and to explore new opportunities. On the other hand, however, major economic shocks make business opportunities less certain and, in turn, companies become less willing to invest in
long-term activities where returns are risky by downsizing expenditures, including expenditures on investment and innovation. The recent COVID-19 crisis has radically revolutionized and transformed the business environment. This ranges from the way firms react to this suddenly needed transformation by shortcutting the way they provide their products and services, how they can transform their supply chain infrastructures to adapt their products, and to how they enhance and extend their service and performance capacity according to disruptive market demands (Sharma et al., 2020). Overall, these developments have led firms in the industry to fundamentally change the ways they “do business”, in particular the ways they conduct activities across the firm and across their value chain. In this very dynamic context, it becomes an imperative for companies to reinvent themselves by often introducing innovative products or novel business models and by utilizing their existing resources and capabilities as well as combining them with new ones (McKinsey & Co., 2020). However, while the majority of the academic articles published so far on the COVID-19 crisis mostly focuses on either supply chain disruptions (Sharma et al., 2020), internal organizational disruptions (Carnevale and Hatak, 2020) or the impact of the crisis on customers (Hall et al., 2020), our work embraces a more holistic approach by focusing on a cross-national and cross-sectorial comparison of those innovation strategies that ultimately might as well yield to growth opportunities. In particular, since crises are defined largely by uncertainty, we couple approaches from the crisis management literature with organizational learning theory (Bundy et al., 2016; James et al., 2011) to gain a better understanding of how companies across countries and industry sectors respond to disruption by innovating, and the valuable lessons that can be drawn from this experience. The purpose of this study is to develop a taxonomy that allows to classify the different types of innovation responses towards crisis and disruption that can have a broader applicability, beyond the COVID-19 crisis. Our contribution is instrumental to explicate a set of valuable lessons that can be taken forward for future events.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Crisis and disaster management models are recognized as significant in organizational disasters and crises studies. Bundy et al. (2016)’s literature review highlights three core stages: pre-crisis prevention, crisis management and post-crisis outcomes stages. Overlapping the crisis management and organizational learning stages, and focusing on the within-organization dynamics of managing risk and complexity, James et al. (2011) and Lampel et al. (2009) highlighted the role of top management to react to crises and either frame them as threats, thus being more limited in their efforts, or as opportunities to be more open and flexible towards change in an emergency situation, learning from it and developing organizational capabilities (Bartsch et al., 2020). Here, the authors stressed the importance of moving beyond the status quo to generate new competitive advantage hence learning from a crisis situation (Bundy et al., 2016; Hunt et al., 1999). Organizational learning is considered an important element of crisis handling (Pearson and Clair, 1998). An organization’s ability to change behaviour in response to an experience or changes is defined adaptive organizational learning (Glynn et al., 1994).

As James et al. (2011) stressed, there is a need to investigate organizational extraordinary performance and positive change and opportunities for organizations to flourish following a crisis. Nonetheless, a considerable part of the literature on strategic management has highlighted that incumbents often fail due to their dominant position, market share, and established way of operating which lead to avoiding risk, instead of focusing on innovation (Christensen, 2015; Schumpeter, 1947; Tellis, 2013). In these regards, the organizational learning literature defines competitive inertia as the level of activity that an organization exhibits when altering its competitive stance in areas such as new product, pricing, advertising, service introductions, or market scope (Hunt, 1999; Miller and Chen, 1994). The theory highlights drivers to inertia, where Miller and Chen (1994) claimed that good past performance contributes to competitive inertia leading to stagnation in products, policies and methods that
often underlies inadequate adaptation to a changing environment. Instead, a diversity of markets discourages it, leading to organizational evolution. Crisis is thought to play a key role in initiating change (James et al., 2011). The organizational learning theory on the notion of inertia therefore provides a valuable lens for this research, where organizational responses in dealing with crises can determine success when facing future crises.

Despite the increasing adoption of crisis management theories to assess how companies learn from crises and risks, the theoretical models that currently exist (e.g., Brockner and James, 2008) are not fully specified, but tend to be conceptual and generic (James et al., 2011). In particular, there is an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of managerial perspective on innovation responses and processes to COVID-19 as a disruptive event and across different sectors, which this work-in-progress aims to fulfil.

**METHODOLOGY**

By relying on 23 semi-structured interviews, we explore the innovation actions and strategies implemented in response to the current COVID-19 crisis. The respondents were selected with a purposive sampling technique (Miles et al., 2014). The interviews are representative of a taxonomy of different responses, involving: potential and temporality regarding COVID-19 crisis (i.e. temporary changes dependent on crisis; long-term changes independent of crisis) and degree of innovation of product/ service and market/ consumer segment (i.e. existing product and market; new product and market). The selected firms offer a wealth of diversity since they tend to operate in different industries across a variety of countries. The interviews followed a structured research protocol, where themes for discussion were informed by the relevant literature and were framed to understand changes in the firms related to COVID-19 crisis and temporality of effects on the firm along with the main lessons learnt.

In-depth interviews were conducted with 23 senior informants deemed as knowledgeable about the companies’ relevant innovation activities. This allowed the development of a close dialogue
(Clark, 1998) with practitioners who had relevant expertise and depth of involvement, thus enabling rich analysis to understand the phenomena under investigation. Interviews were conducted from spring 2020 to early 2021, recorded and transcribed. The primary data collected through the interviews was then triangulated and complemented by secondary data, in the form of media reports and company documentation. The interviews and the secondary data collected were then analyzed following established qualitative analysis principles of thematic analysis, using the research protocol to guide the data coding (Guest et al., 2012; Miles et al., 2014) in order to identify possible patterns in the firms’ innovation responses to the COVID-19 crisis. Coding labels were revised as data collection and analysis proceeded iteratively, and conducting a back-and-forth examination of theory and data (Spiggle 1994). This rigorous interpretive process continued until data saturation meant no new themes were emerging from the analysis. Our analytical process led to the development of a taxonomy that allows to classify the different types of innovation responses towards crisis and disruption.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings showed that the response of the most proactive organizations has been shaped by some of their distinctive resources that make them adaptive survivors. These are namely the widespread creativity, the contagious enthusiasm that swipe through their industry, and the emotional attachment to the businesses since some of them are family businesses that often own heritage brands. Many of the organizations investigated showed resourcefulness, being able to turn a crisis into a viable opportunity, ambidexterity by exploring new opportunities capitalizing on their existing core capabilities and know-how. Promptness as they were able to seize the relevant opportunities in a timely manner, pragmatism and flexibility as they were able to strategize and implement change within the time constraints imposed by the crisis. We provide a classification of the various types of innovation responses to the existing crisis and disruption, derived from our analysis as depicted in the Table 1 below.
Temporary Changes Depending on COVID-19 Crisis, Existing Products

Several firms adapting to crisis through temporary and ad-hoc solutions emerged. This involved prompt, short-term changes to their ways of operating, with only minor changes to existing products or services. Examples involved flexible hospital solutions and hotels and schools temporary converted into isolation hospitals to treat COVID-19 affected patients. In a rapid search for more beds, the Manager of Ayre Gran Hotel Colón in Madrid, Spain, explained that “our hotel has been repurposed to fight the pandemic. We have offered our hotel beds and facilities for nursing staff, vulnerable populations and anyone fighting the spread of coronavirus.” These temporary reactions show flexibility and promptness of reacting to solve a problem, especially in a context where hotel rooms are underused to an emergency situation.

Temporary Changes Depending on COVID-19 Crisis, New Products and Customer Segments

From the findings it emerged that another cluster of firms reacted to crisis by adapting their solutions in a temporary way, by shifting into new product or service solutions, hence targeting a new customer base and / or a new market. This involved a swift response of companies to learn by the crisis and promptly adapt their solutions. Examples include fashion companies starting to produce medical gowns and gloves to assist medical staff dealing with the emergency and cosmetics companies starting to produce hand sanitizers and lotions. However, several informants shared the view that companies that joined in adapting their solutions at a later stage, following what others had already done, could be mostly related to marketing and brand promotion, to gain publicity for the company. Nonetheless, many respondents agreed that rapid solution showed reactive responses to manage the crisis.

Adaptation of existing services into new operational contexts emerged being another area where organizations showed proactive attitude to face the crisis. In these regards, the German
motherhood care company Kinderheldin started offering midwife services online instead of home visits, thus showing flexibility turning an existing service to better cater for customer needs during the pandemic. The CEO of Kinderheldin stated that “Figuring out that German health insurances where willing to finance online health-services, we reached over 400 new clients for our digital midwife classes within 3 days.” This is a remarkable pragmatic change that the company has undertaken to react to market changes by showing resourcefulness. While the service provision is likely to go back to what they offered prior to the pandemic emergency, some degrees of blended delivery of health service might remain.

**Long-Term Changes, Existing Products**

Findings revealed that in many cases a key success factor consisted in firms applying a long-term transformation of their product or service offering, in terms of adapting their existing business model to better serve an existing market and reach out to a broader range of customers within that market segment. To fight crisis stagnation of many industries, especially hospitality where many activities were not allowed during the pandemic crisis, a strong spirit of creative adaptation emerged from several organizations. For example, UK company Gousto providing subscription-based fresh food and recipes box delivery partnered up with local supermarkets through the initiative “Food Finder” allowing customers during lockdown to shop online at local supermarkets through an app powered by Gousto. Gousto also expanded their services by partnering up with local farmers to supply for the rapidly increased demand for recipe boxes, as their Acquisition and Retention Director explained, “with lockdown measures being imposed, we suddenly saw a sharp increase of our customers’ demand, and new customers wanting to join in too. As we could not expand our supply chain facilities so promptly, we partnered up with local farmers to serve more customers, and at the same time that gave the possibility to farmers to use our facilities and infrastructures to help distribute their products”.

This response shows the ability of the most proactive businesses to partner up and join forces
with other players to help expand one’s customer base or innovate the existing business model to face sudden changes.

Within this cluster, several apparel companies started to collaborate with designers and expand their offering into home design and new loungewear products, as the lockdown forced people to spend more time at home. Several fashion retailers expanded their online channels, by offering further delivery and return options, and better ways of visualizing products online and interact with the brand’s customer care teams. In China, Little Red Book, Weibo, and Taobao have been livestreaming their latest collections, making them shoppable with Chinese influencers. As Alibaba’s Relationships Director comments, “We think livestreaming is very important. Currently, around 60 percent of our livestreaming audience is from lower-tier cities.” This shopping channel therefore helped businesses in China to expand and reach a broader customer base, using celebrities and show formats to provide entertainment and connect with their customers during the lockdown phase.

**Long-Term Changes, New Products and Customer Segments**

Few cases emerged of firms who disrupted their ways of thinking and operating, expanding into new products or services to reach a new customer base, and with long-term changes that are likely to stay post pandemic. This cluster of “true innovators” emerged from a creative response to the crisis, and included the organizations’ ability to adapt functional core processes. Here, strong innovation embrace and an agile, flexible approach characterized the company, by forcing it to think outside the existing customer base and product offering. This involved the provision of online parties and experiences, and online events. Several fashion brands embraced new ways of delivering their catwalk shows during the fashion weeks, going virtual to find new way to engage their audience. Balenciaga, for example, debuted a novel runway show format thorough a customized video game where guests could register to interact with avatars wearing the Fall 2021 collection. This shows an attempt to deliver a new format
in the midst of the pandemic, when entire fashion runway seasons were forced to cancel, and involving a set of stakeholders to interact with the new collection.

**CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE**

From the findings several contributions tend to emerge. First, the findings support the view that a strong commitment from top management to react to crisis (James et al., 2011; Lampel et al., 2009), and the resources available to deal with it, including overall change embracement across the organization and capabilities (Bartsch et al., 2020) are crucial to successfully overcome the crises. These aspects affect the capability of firms to collaborate with other businesses to exploit know-how and resources available. Additionally, our findings highlight that whilst strategically engaging with partners, maintaining alignment with the overall brand image and identity are of pivotal importance. Second, our findings revealed that the adaptive behavior of firms does not depend exclusively on their size and degree of establishment – for instance, in contrast with the literature (Christensen, 2015; Schumpeter, 1947; Tellis, 2003) some of the most reactive firms emerged being incumbents with established market share.

Our classification of the various types of firms’ innovation responses to the existing crisis and disruption provides valuable insights to risk and crisis management and wider implications for organizational innovation and growth. In particular, this work-in-progress aims at contributing a framework for managing crisis and business growth and innovation. By drawing on the different initiatives undertaken by the firms clustered according to their innovation response, the framework is instrumental to explicate a set of lessons that can be valuable to managers and practitioners from a variety of different industries. Our work contributes to the strategic management literature, especially in the crisis management and organizational learning.

Moreover, in a time in which businesses more than ever need to innovate to survive and thrive through crises and the rapid pace of market change, our study will provide guidelines to managers on how to deal with crises in the future, and how to innovate to respond to disruption.
Success from embracing the crisis calls for managers to encourage and nurture a mind-set and practice that are open to intensive experimentation, including multiple trial and error iterations infused with action learning. In turn, this demands a high degree of resilience within the organization. As our findings show, embedding learning via experimentation, action learning cycles, resilience and an entrepreneurial mind-set is the critical point of departure if the potential successes and benefits of embracing the crisis are to be attained.

**TABLE 1** Classification of innovation responses to COVID-19 crisis

|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| **Existing product (and existing/ new market/ customer segment)** | • Ayre Gran Hotel Colón, turning hotel facilities into hospital solutions  
• Barbieri, providing flexible hospital solutions  
• Air Dolomiti, providing special flight routes during pandemic | • Deliveroo Essentials, food delivery from supermarkets  
• Gousto, partnering with local supermarkets and farmers  
• LogMeIn, extending online meeting and education provision  
• Cisco Webex, enhancing software versions  
• TooGoodToGo, empowering restaurants’ takeaway services  
• OmniLabs, providing telepresence robots  
• Anthropology, expanding into home design and loungewear  
• Alibaba, livestreaming latest collection with celebrities  
• Amazon, adapting supply chain to serve higher demands  
• Lamborghini, creating an app for car customization and customer service  
• Oysho, extending into sports line and providing fitness classes |
| **New product (and existing/ new market/ customer segment)** | • Miroglio, producing gowns and masks  
• Ferrari, producing ventilators  
• Luxottica, producing medical eyewear  
• Bosch Healthcare, using viral testing devices in tents  
• Kinderheldin, providing midwife services online  
• Distillerie Mazzari, producing hand sanitizers | • Gousto, setting up Table for One Million event  
• Balenciaga, debuting new runway format customized video game  
• Airbnb, creating virtual experiences in a set of contexts  
• Lululemon, providing a virtual reality mirror to practice yoga and check postures at home |
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Consumer Behavior
AN EXPLORATORY ASSESSMENT OF CONSUMER EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN CONSUMER ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

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**Keywords:** consumer emotional intelligence, emotional intelligence, consumer ethical decision making, consumer ethics

**Description:** This research aimed to answer the question: Does consumer emotional intelligence influence consumer ethics?

**EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

**Research Question**

Emotions have been shown in psychology research to have a significant role in ethical decision making (Haidt, 2003). The ability to experience, perceive, and regulate emotions, which are components of emotional intelligence, should influence consumers’ ethical decision-making (Chowdhury, 2017; Davies et al., 1998). Yet, research has neglected the relationships among affective variables and consumer ethics (Chowdhury, 2017).
Our understanding of how consumers use emotional information to make effective decisions is incomplete (Gkintoni et al., 2017; Kidwell et al., 2007). “Since decision-making by consumers in situations involving ethical issues is an important aspect of consumer behavior, the role of emotions in understanding this facet of consumer behavior is of great importance and relevance” (Vitell et al., 2013, p. 76). This research aimed to answer the question: Does consumer emotional intelligence influence consumer ethics?

**Method and Data**

A total of 316 consumers living in the United States who are part of an online consumer panel managed by Qualtrics participated in this study. Based on a quota of gender distribution, 158 participants (50%) identified as male and 158 participants (50%) identified as female.

The concept of consumer emotional intelligence was measured using Kidwell et al.’s (2007) consumer emotional intelligence scale (CEIS). The dimension of perceiving was measured by five items, facilitating was measured by four items, understanding was measured by five items, and managing was measured by four items.

Consumer ethics was measured using the Muncy-Vitell Consumer Ethics Scale (CES) (2005) with some minor modifications. The dimension of actively benefiting from illegal actions was measured by five items, passively benefiting was measured by five items, questionable, but legal actions was measured by four items, no harm, no foul was measured by five items, downloading was measured by two items, recycling was measured by four items, and doing good was measured by three items.

**Summary of Findings**
An exploratory analysis of the consumer emotional intelligence dimensions was conducted to determine which dimensions are predictive of the seven dimensions of the consumer ethics scale. Seven separate regression analyses were conducted with each of the four CEIS dimensions as independent variables and beliefs regarding the seven dimensions of CES as the dependent variables.

For the downloading of copyrighted materials/buying counterfeit goods category of the consumer ethics scale, the results revealed that both the facilitating and managing dimensions of CEI significantly predicted a consumer’s ethical perspective on downloading copyrighted materials and buying counterfeit goods. Perceiving and managing were both significant indicators of recycling behavior. The dimension of doing good was the only dimension to be predicted by three of the four consumer emotional intelligence dimensions including perceiving, understanding, and managing. Both understanding and managing were significant gauges for the actively benefitting from illegal activities dimension of consumer ethics. Managing was the only dimension of consumer emotional intelligence to predict passively benefiting from both illegal activities, and questionable, but legal consumer ethics dimensions. It is also worth noting that the managing element of consumer emotional intelligence helped predict six of the seven dimensions of consumer ethics.

This research demonstrated the influence of the dimensions of consumer emotional intelligence on the different dimensions of consumer ethics, most specifically the pro-social behaviors of downloading, recycling, and doing good behaviors.

**Key Contributions**
This study helps consumer behavior researchers further understand how ethical consumption is shaped by emotional intelligence and fill the important gap in the literature on consumer ethics left by the lack of studies on the role of emotions in consumers’ ethical decision making (Chowdhury, 2017).

Specifically, this research provided a detailed look at the relationship between consumer EI and consumer ethics by investigating the effects of the different dimensions of consumer emotional intelligence on consumers’ ethical beliefs. The ability to manage emotions proved to be the most important component of consumer emotional intelligence in terms of its effects on nearly all (six of the seven) of the consumer ethical dimensions. These results reaffirm that emotions have a significant role in consumers’ ethical decision making. Understanding customer’s EI will help practitioners develop relationships that are more meaningful with customers, target customers in the right place at the right time, and understand customers’ emotional triggers.

References are available upon request.
ANTECEDENTS OF BUNDLE PURCHASES – THE INFLUENCE OF THE CUSTOMER-RETAILER RELATIONSHIP AND BROWSING ON BUNDLE PURCHASES

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Keywords: Bundle Purchases; Signaling Theory; Customer-Retailer Relationship; Browsing; Bundle Type

Description: Our research investigates the influence of the customer-retailer relationship and browsing behavior on bundle purchases and tests for differences between product and price bundles.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question – Consumers’ familiarity with the bundle components (Harris and Blair 2006a; Moon and Shugan 2018) and with the product category of the bundle (Arora 2011; Reinders, Frambach, and Schoormans 2010) are associated with a preference for bundles in a way that less familiar consumers are more inclined to purchase bundles. However, other forms of familiarity such as the familiarity with the retailer were not yet investigated in a bundle context even though it was found to significantly impact consumer behavior (Guyt and Gijsbrechts 2019; Inman, Winer, and Ferraro 2009). Further, bundling research has used the terms product and price bundles ambiguously (Stremersch and Tellis 2002) and investigated the different types of bundles mostly in isolation. To fill these gaps, we will investigate the following research questions: 1) Is a
weaker customer-retailer relationship and less browsing related to a preference for bundles? 2) Are there differences regarding these relationships between product and price bundles?

**Method And Data** – We investigated the research questions using a large-scale dataset obtained from a German e-commerce retailer. All purchases of the 2019 sales period were analyzed, resulting in 416,658 purchased items of which 29% were bundles. Previous purchases and browsing could be tracked back until May 2013. The analysis was conducted in two steps. First, the effect on bundle purchases was evaluated in a main analysis, then the effect on product vs. price bundles was analyzed in a post hoc analysis. Both analyses were logistic regressions. The dependent variable of the main analysis was a dummy for bundle yes vs. no as seen in Harris and Blair (2006). The dependent variable of the post hoc analysis distinguished between product and price bundles. The independent variables were the same across both analyses. The customer-retailer relationship was measured using past transactions as seen in similar research (de Cannière, de Pelsmacker, and Geuens 2010), more precisely the number of previous transactions and the existence of a recent purchase event were used. The browsing variables were the number of previous sessions (Im et al. 2019) and the number of page views during the purchase session (Gallino and Moreno 2018; Huang, Lurie, and Mitra 2009; Moe 2003).

**Summary of Findings** – We find that the number of previous purchases and the existence of a recent purchase are negatively related to bundle purchases. Further, there was a negative association between both browsing variables (number of sessions before the purchase, page views during the purchase session) and bundle purchases. Thus, consumers with higher levels of uncertainty (i.e. lower levels of familiarity with the retailer) seem to rely more on the popularity signals of bundles (Moon and Shugan 2018) when making their purchase decision than consumers with lower levels of uncertainty. Additionally, this confirms that the search-cost-reducing
properties of bundles (Harris and Blair 2006b) are more relevant to consumers that have invested less time into browsing. The post hoc analysis confirmed that the customer-retailer relationship and browsing were negatively associated with product bundle purchases compared to price bundle purchases, showing that the sale-independent signals of product bundles are stronger than the sale-dependent signals of price bundles (classification of signals see Kirmani and Rao (2000)).

**Key Contributions** – We contribute to the literature in several ways. First, we show that in addition to the familiarity with the product (Harris and Blair 2006a; Moon and Shugan 2018), the familiarity with the retailer plays a role when purchasing bundles. Specifically, we show that both the familiarity with the retailer’s full customer experience as measured by previous purchases and the familiarity with the retailer’s website as measured by previous browsing behavior are relevant components when choosing bundles. Second, we further the understanding of the two types of bundles by showing that integrated product bundles send stronger signals of popularity or appeal than unintegrated price bundles. This finding highlights the need to clearly distinguish between product and price bundles in future research. Lastly, we validate and extend signaling theory (Spence 1973) in a bundling context. While it was originally applied in the context of bundled add-ons which are *costless* signals (Moon and Shugan 2018), our work shows that it can also be used in the context of product and price bundles which are *costly* signals. This should empower researchers to investigate research questions based on signaling theory for all types of bundles in the future.

*References are available upon request*
BORED OR JOYFUL? DESIGN-DRIVEN CONSUMER EMOTIONS AND
PRODUCT SUCCESS

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Keywords: product design, emotions, joy, boredom, consumer behavior

Description: Following a disaggregated perspective, this research investigates the role of selected positive and negative consumer emotions in the relationship of perceived product design (aesthetics, functionality, and symbolism) and consumer behavior.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Product design drives consumer emotions and subsequent behavior. Despite the attention paid to emotions in consumer behavior (Bagozzi, Belanche, Casaló, and Flavián 2016) and industrial design research (Desmet 2002), most of the studies on product design focus on positive emotions and neglect the influence of product design on negative emotions (e.g., Fokkinga and Desmet 2012). Moreover, the product design literature does not provide detailed information on the effect of negative emotions on consumer rejection behavior, thus, missing the downstream consequences of positive and negative emotions driven by product design (Chitturi 2009). The objectives of this research are, thus, to examine the influence of the perceived product design dimensions aesthetics, functionality, and symbolism attributes (Homburg, Schwemmle, and Kuehnl 2015) on positive and negative consumer emotions. Second, the different effects of positive versus negative emotions evoked by product design on purchase intention and WOM are analyzed. Third, this research examines the independent effects of 14 single positive and negative emotions (i.e., pride, admiration, joy, hope, satisfaction, desire, fascination and shame, contempt, sadness, fear, anger, disgust, boredom) on consumer behavior. By theoretically and empirically investigating these objectives, this research aims at crossing the bridge between research in industrial design, emotions, and consumer behavior.
Method and Data

An online experiment was conducted (n=179, M_age=33.00 years, 53.10% male) to test the proposed relationships. Participants were first introduced to the survey followed by the exposure to a product stimulus and then requested to complete an online questionnaire on their purchase intention and WOM, followed by questions on consumer emotions, product design dimensions, and socio-demographic questions. Seven positive and seven negative consumer emotions were measured while participants viewed the product with items of the Product Emotion Measurement Instrument (PrEmo2; Desmet 2019) and on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from "not at all intense" to "very intense". We transferred PrEmo2 from the industrial design literature to marketing research and thus refer to consumer emotions instead of product emotions. Each emotion was represented by a cartoon character showing the specific emotion. The product category under consideration was laptop cases.

Summary of Findings

A series of Process Models 4 (Hayes 2018; bootstrap=5,000) finds significant effects of the three product design dimensions aesthetics, functionality, and symbolism on consumer purchase intention and word-of-mouth behavior (WOM), mediated by positive consumer emotions. Negative consumer emotions mediate the relationship between perceived product design and purchase intention; however, they are barely relevant for WOM. For an in-depth analysis of the effects of the individual positive and negative consumer emotions on purchase intention and WOM, we used a disaggregated perspective considering single emotions.

Regarding positive emotions, results reveal that consumer desire (B=.09, p<.05, CI95[-.01… .18]), joy (B=.20, p<.01, CI95[.08… .33]), hope (B=.09, p<.01, CI95[.03… .15]), pride (B=.12, p<.05, CI95[.01… .23]), and satisfaction (B=.11, p<.05, CI95[.00… .21]) elicited by perceived product design influence consumer behavior, with joy having the strongest effect. Results concerning negative emotions show that especially boredom (B=-.22, p<.01, CI95[-.34… -
.09}) inhibits purchase intention and WOM for all three product design dimensions, with shame (B=-.13, p<.10, CI[95[-.28… .01]) and contempt (B=-.15, p<.05, CI[95[-.29… -.02]) also having negative effects.

**Key Contributions**

This research investigates the influence of product design on positive and negative consumer emotions and their different effects on consumer behavior. Importantly, the under-researched effect of negative emotions and the role of single emotions for consumer behavior are addressed. The present work expands literature on emotions in industrial design and reveals that especially consumer joy as driving emotion and consumer boredom as inhibiting emotion shape both purchase intention and WOM. Results of an experimental study show that purchase intention is not exclusively driven by positive, but also significantly inhibited by negative consumer emotions evoked by product design, while WOM is mainly based on positive emotions. Marketers should ensure that their product design evokes joy by meeting their consumers’ need for novelty and change through innovative aesthetic and functional product design attributes. Additionally, product design must be interesting and exciting in terms of its aesthetics and functionality to avoid negative effects of boredom and to give consumers the opportunity to express themselves through product design. This research crosses the bridge between product design research, emotions, and consumer behavior to generate novel knowledge for academia and management.

**Selected References are available upon request.**
BRIEF DECISION SCIENCE INTERVENTION FOR CHANGING NEGATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD OPIOID AGONIST TREATMENT: RESULTS FROM A PILOT STUDY IN UKRAINE

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Keywords: psychological ownership, endowment effect, attitude change, evidence-based treatment, intervention design

Description: we developed and pilot-tested a brief intervention among prison medical professionals that targets attitude change via a perceived ownership of a solution to a problem, where the investment of time in a brief problem-solving task results in psychological ownership of a particular idea; namely, the endorsement of evidence-based practices.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Eastern Europe is the only UNAIDS region where HIV incidence and mortality are increasing, mainly driven by people who inject drugs and suboptimal HIV prevention and treatment (UNAIDS, 2016). Scaling up opioid agonist therapies (OAT) with methadone and
buprenorphine is the most cost-effective strategy for HIV prevention (Alistar, Owens, and Brandeau 2011), but remains unavailable within Ukrainian prisons as its introduction has been hampered by negative attitudes toward it by patients and providers in community and prison settings (Polonsky et al. 2016). Interventions that overcome such negative attitudes are urgently needed to effectively implement HIV prevention efforts. Although accurate knowledge about OAT in Ukraine is associated with its endorsement (Cohen 2010), educational knowledge-focused interventions are insufficient to overcome these negative attitudes because ideological prejudices impose a ceiling effect on such interventions (Polonsky et al. 2016).

To address the existing ideological biases and to directly target ubiquitous negative attitudes toward OAT among prison health officials, we developed, pilot-tested, and report the results of a brief intervention called Endowment Training Intervention (EnTrI), which draws from marketing and decision sciences and targets attitude change via a perceived ownership of a solution to a problem, where the investment of time in a brief problem-solving task results in psychological ownership of ideas.

**Method and Data**

Prison medical supervisors 94 (57 male/37 female) were randomized to either the experimental (n=50) or control (n=44) conditions, using a post-test only design. Both groups completed an 8-item OAT knowledge assessment ($\alpha=0.88$). The experimental group completed the EnTrI exercise while controls completed a time-matched personality survey. Both groups then listened to a 30-minute, standardized training lecture about addiction and its treatment. Afterwards, participants completed the standardized, post-test measure of OAT attitudes ($\alpha=0.90$; Polonsky et al., 2015).

EnTrI Description
The 10-minute EnTrI exercised offered participants 12 evidence-based indicators of effectiveness in treating opioid dependence (e.g., affordability, safety, crime), and asks them to rate each of the indicator’s respective value as it appears to them on a 10-point Likert scale. Because OAT indicators are supported by evidence, participants’ responses from partaking in a decision-making process are hypothesized to become more aligned with the evidence presented during the standardized informative lecture about OAT that unobtrusively reinforces EnTrI by reviewing the effectiveness criteria and demonstrating that evidence-based OAT is superior to other (non-evidence-based) options. To avoid ascertainment bias, participants are blinded to randomization and to any cues revealing the true purpose of the intervention. EnTrI relies on a participant’s individual mental effort invested into thinking about the problem and measurable effectiveness criteria (e.g., reduction in mortality is most important to me), elicits thinking about possible solutions (e.g., what can be done to reduce mortality?), and subsequently provides a resolution to the problem (e.g., OAT is effective in reducing mortality).

Summary of Findings

At baseline, there were no group differences, including in OAT knowledge, age, and education (t<0.60, p>0.70 in all cases). The analysis of variance produced a main effect for the EnTrI intervention (F=7.97, p<0.01; η²=0.08), where the attitudes toward OAT in EnTrI was significantly higher than in control group (t(93)=2.83, p<0.01, d=0.59). The main effect for knowledge (F=6.86, p<0.01; η²=0.07), with individuals having higher levels of knowledge in both groups held more positive attitudes; and a significant intervention*knowledge interaction effect (F=4.19, p=0.04; η²=0.05) that qualified the relationship between intervention and knowledge: Experimental M(low knowledge)=3.68, SD=0.71; M(high knowledge)=3.76, SD=0.66, and Control M(low knowledge)=3.01, SD=0.70; M(high knowledge)=3.65, SD=0.50.
Statement of Key Contributions

To our knowledge, this pilot study is the first to draw upon advances in marketing and decision sciences to target ideological resistance toward evidence-based treatment of opioid addiction. Ukraine is experiencing one of the most volatile HIV epidemics globally, fueled primarily by people who inject drugs, and a parallel incarceration epidemic. Opioid agonist treatment (OAT) is internationally recognized as one of the most effective forms of treatment for opioid dependence and is among the most effective HIV prevention strategies available, yet efforts to adopt it in Ukraine’s Criminal Justice System have been thwarted, and the adoption of OST has been more influenced by myths and ideological prejudices than by existing scientific evidence. To address this concern, we developed and pilot-tested a brief intervention among prison medical professionals that draws from marketing and decision sciences and targets attitude change via a perceived ownership of a solution to a problem, where the investment of time in a brief problem-solving task results in psychological ownership of a particular idea; namely, the endorsement of OAT.

The intervention offers participants 12 evidence-based indicators of effectiveness in treating opioid dependence, and asks them to rate each of the indicator’s respective value as it appears to them. Our findings support the research hypothesis that EnTrI improves attitudes toward OAT among prison health personnel, the group that would ultimately implement it, and has its greatest effect among those with low prior knowledge about OAT. The results of this study will be of relevance and interest to health care providers, marketers, global health professionals, and policy makers. The results are currently being used to inform a large NIH grant.
Can celebrity be liable for fans' misbehavior?

Key Contributions to academe and practitioners

This research aimed to examine whether fan–celebrity relationship strength affects public opinion regarding whether a celebrity should take responsibility for the misconduct of their fans and the intention to boycott a celebrity. This research involved two studies.

The findings of this research suggest that the higher the strength of the fan–celebrity relationship, the higher the likelihood of consumers attributing fan misconduct to a celebrity. Therefore, celebrities and their agents are advised to improve the management of and increase the attention paid to fans or fan groups that have a strong relationship with them, such as leaders of fan clubs and online fan groups managed by celebrities, to ensure that fans who are close to them do not engage in inappropriate behavior that can harm their reputation or negatively affect the brands that they endorse.

Furthermore, the industry is advised to reduce the damage sustained by celebrities from inappropriate fan behavior by reducing consumers’ power distance belief. In the event of public outrage toward inappropriate fan behavior, celebrities or their agents should attempt to explain to the public that people are equal, that celebrities do not have the power to lead or supervise their fans, and that fans have the right—which celebrities cannot regulate or restrict—to pursue and idolize celebrities. Reducing the level of consumers’ power distance belief in this manner can considerably reduce the intention to boycott celebrities.

The originality of this research includes two: First, this research is among the first to examine how inappropriate fan behavior negatively affects celebrities. Second, this paper introduces a novel critical moderating variable, namely power distance belief, for studies on the fan–celebrity relationship.
Can celebrity be liable for fans' misbehavior?

Extended Abstract

Numerous studies have been conducted on the negative endorsement caused by celebrities’ misconduct (Zhou and Whitla, 2013); however, few studies have investigated whether negative fan behavior can affect consumers’ attitude toward the relevant celebrity and cause consumers to boycott the brands endorsed by the celebrity. Given that numerous incidents of celebrities being criticized and boycotted by the public because of the misconduct of their fans have occurred over the years, the present research examined the effect of fan misconduct on celebrities to fill this research gap. Relationship strength refers to the contact frequency and rapport between the two parties in a relationship (Wang and Groth, 2014). If a celebrity has frequent contact or a close relationship with their fans, then consumers consider the celebrity to possess the power to prevent inappropriate fan behavior because of the apparent high fan–celebrity relationship strength. In this scenario, consumers’ boycotts against a celebrity for inappropriate fan behavior would be strong because the celebrity is held accountable for the fan behavior. Conversely, if the relationship between a celebrity and their fans is weak, then consumers consider the celebrity to not possess the power to prevent inappropriate fan behavior. In this scenario, the boycotts against the celebrity would be relatively weak. On the basis of the aforementioned discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Consumers have a higher intention to boycott a celebrity when the celebrity–fan relationship has high strength than when this relationship has low strength.

H2: The relation between relationship strength and boycott intention is mediated by consumers’ attribution of service failure.

Power Distance Belief

According to the aforementioned studies, individuals with high power distance belief consider the fan–celebrity relationship to be unequal (Hofstede, 1984). Specifically, they believe that celebrities have the power to influence and control the behavior of their fans. Therefore, when fan–celebrity relationship strength is high, the aforementioned individuals hold the celebrity accountable for the misconduct of their fans and thus boycott the celebrity. Conversely, individuals with low power distance belief consider the fan–celebrity relationship to be equal; that is, they believe that a celebrity has little influence or control over fan behavior. Therefore, regardless of fan–celebrity relationship strength, the aforementioned individuals do not perceive a difference in the level of responsibility that celebrities should bear for fan misconduct and thus exhibit no difference in their boycott intention. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H3: Under the condition of low power distance belief, consumers have the same intention to boycott a celebrity regardless of fan–celebrity relationship strength. However, under the condition of high power distance belief, consumers have higher intention to boycott a celebrity when fan–celebrity relationship strength is high than when fan–celebrity relationship strength is low.

H4: Consumers’ power distance belief moderates the effect of relationship strength on internal attribution while further affecting the intention to boycott a celebrity.

Study 1

Participants and Stimuli
In Study 1, data from 80 participants were collected and analyzed. Study 1 used a two-factor (high and low fan–celebrity relationship strength) between-participant experimental design. Study 1 directly manipulates the relationship strength between the celebrity and fan individual by two kinds of news report, such that in one case they are portrayed as having high familiarity (high relationship strength) and in the other case they are portrayed as having low familiarity (low relationship strength) (Hebl et al., 2003).

Results and Discussion

Perceived fan–celebrity relationship strength significantly affected boycott intention ($t_{(92)} = 2.65, p < 0.05$). The participants who perceived fan–celebrity relationship strength to be high had higher boycott intention ($M_{High} = 2.71$) than did those who perceived fan–celebrity relationship strength to be low ($M_{Low} = 2.09$). Thus, H1 was supported.

Bootstrapping (5,000 samples) was performed on the PROCESS macro (model 4) developed by Hayes (2013) in a mediator model to estimate the effects of perceived fan–celebrity relationship strength on boycott intention. Internal attribution mediated the effect of fan–celebrity relationship strength on boycott intention (95% confidence interval [CI] = [0.02, 0.73]). Thus, H2 was supported.

Study 2

Participants and Stimuli

In Study 2, 160 adult consumers were recruited from an online panel of a marketing research company. Each of the participants received US$1.00 as compensation. Study 2 adopted a 2 (high or low fan–celebrity relationship strength) × 2 (high or low power distance belief) between-participant experimental design, and the participants were randomly assigned to four groups.

Results and Discussion

H3 proposes a substantial moderating effect of power distance belief (Mod) on the mediation path from relationship strength ($X$) to internal attribution ($Med$). The results revealed a crucial interaction between relationship strength and power distance belief that affected the extent of generated internal attribution ($t = 2.20, p < 0.05$). Thus, the first stage of the mediation model ($X \rightarrow Med$) was moderated and consistent with H3.

When relationship strength was controlled for, internal attribution exhibited a significant effect on boycott intention ($Med \rightarrow Y$, $t_{boycott\ intention} = 9.24, p < 0.01$). When internal attribution was controlled for, the direct effect of relationship strength on boycott intention was not significant ($t_{boycott\ intention} = 0.44, p > 0.05$). The aforementioned results confirmed H4.

Conclusion

The findings of this research suggest that the higher the strength of the fan–celebrity relationship, the higher the likelihood of consumers attributing fan misconduct to a celebrity. Therefore, celebrities and their agents are advised to improve the management of and increase the attention paid to fans or fan groups that have a strong relationship with them, such as leaders of fan clubs and online fan groups managed by celebrities, to ensure that fans who are close to them do not engage in inappropriate behavior that can harm their reputation or negatively affect the brands that they endorse (Brown et al., 2013; Ilhan et al., 2018).

Selected References


Cashbacks: Buying More or Less?

Key Contributions

Theoretically, the research on cashbacks is still at a very nascent stage, and therefore, this study adds to the literature. This is one of the first studies to the best of our knowledge, explaining what conditions cashbacks may have a negative influence.

This study has implications for profit firms. Specifically, this study has significant contributions to retailers, marketing managers, and third-party cashback organizations. It explains the importance of cashback designing as it is not necessary that cashbacks will always be profitable for the firms. Thus, during the decision-making process of cashbacks, marketers need to design it with caution.

Extended Abstract

Introduction

Cashback has evolved as a new form of price promotion to attract consumers (Vana, Lambrecht, and Bertini 2018). It has generated thousands of daily transactions for firms and engaged customers with the rebates (Ballestar, Grau-Carles, and Sainz 2016). The phenomenal growth of cashbacks in both online and offline marketplace illustrates its growing popularity amongst consumers. The emergences of e-wallets such as Paytm, Mobikwik, Freecharge, TopCashback, Quidco, CashKaro, and Pennyful who often rely on cashbacks have accelerated the popularity of cashbacks. While e-wallets have popularized this, there are also e-tailers and offline retailers such as Shoppers Stop, Reliance, Lifestyle, Ajio, Myntra and Pantaloons adopting cashbacks as a promotional tool. Cashback has gained popularity with the boom of e-commerce and has helped organizations grow their revenues. The e-commerce firms started giving a discount in the form of cashback to attract and engage customers. The boom in e-commerce market with $25.6 trillion
in sales worldwide in the year 2018 (UNCTAD 2020) has created a need to devise new marketing strategies to capture the wider segments of customers.

The growing usage of cashback schemes suggests that consumers like it, and retailers find it useful. Retailers typically adopt cashback schemes to get consumers to increase the ticket size of the transactions. However, cashback may actually encourage consumers to spend less. In this study, we especially show that in certain conditions, cashbacks can have a negative effect on retailers as they lead to consumers reducing the ticket size of the transactions.

**Literature Review**

Cashback is defined as “a web-based marketing practice in which a business rewards one or more affiliates for each visitor or customer brought about by the affiliates’ marketing efforts” (Ryan, 2006 p. 206). Researchers have classified cashbacks as a type of affiliate marketing (Ballestar, Grau-Carles, and Sainz 2016).

Moreover, it is also seen as one of the types of price promotion (Vana, Lambrecht and Bertini 2018). Cashback has emerged as a short-term option for the marketer to engage the customers and gain their trust (Ballestar, Sainz and Torrent-Sellens 2016). It helps to boost the profitability of the brand in a very short duration (Ballestar, Sainz and Torrent-Sellens 2016). A consumer always tries to offset the losses with gain (Cheng and Cryder 2018). Thus, cashback is making their place in the market and proven to be widely successful in engaging customers, especially online. However, the literature on cashbacks is at an early stage and therefore provides enough scope to investigate the influence of cashbacks.

A review of the type of cashback schemes shows that there are various types of cashback schemes that are popular. Some of these cashbacks are a flat cashback ($P off), flat-rate
cashback (Q% off), or a rate cashback with a maximum cashback (R% off with maximum off $S). There is very little research in the domain of cashbacks, and there is hardly any literature that has compared different types of cashbacks.

**Research Objective**

The objective of this study is to investigate whether cashbacks lead to a reduction in the consumer’s transaction size. Imagine a consumer having to choose between two products, one of $1000 and a better product of $1500. Now, in the condition of no cashback, a consumer is likely to exhibit their typical choice pattern. Even in the situation where there is a flat cashback (say 20%), the choice pattern may not get altered. However, when there is an upper limit on the cashbacks says (20% cashback, with maximum cashback $200), then in both the cases whether the consumers buy a product or $1000 or $1500, they get the same percentage discount of 20%, the maximum discount gets restricted to $200. As such, if they buy a lower-priced product, they avail 20% off; however, if they buy the more expensive product at $1500 they are not able to avail the 20% off, and as such, they are not likely to avail the offer.

This can be explained from a mental accounting perspective (Thaler 1999). While consumers in both cases get the same actual discount, they tend to lose a notional discount of $100, when they buy the product at $1500. We show the empirical evidence next.

**Methodology**

The study uses an experimental approach.

*Design and Procedure:* Subjects ($N = 123$) were randomly allocated to one of the four conditions of between-subjects design. In each of the cells, the consumers were given a situation
that they had to choose between two power banks, one (Intex) priced at INR 1000 and the other (Philips) priced at INR 1500. The cells differed in the type of promotions offered. The cells had no cashback (NC, control cell), flat cashback (FC, flat 20% cashback), low cashback with a ceiling (LC, 20% cashback, maximum limit INR 200), and high cashback with a ceiling (HC, 40% cashback, maximum limit INR 200).

**Dependent Measure:** Subjects indicated which of the two products they would like to buy, Intex (priced at INR 1000) or Philips (priced at INR 1500).

($1 = 73 INR approx.)

**Analysis and Results**

The proportion of people who choose the high priced product in NC (no cashback) condition was 87.5%. This could be taken as a choice pattern unaffected by cashbacks. A Chi-square test showed that the proportion of people who choose the high priced product varied across the four cells ($\chi^2 = 8.43, p = 0.03$). The proportions are shown below in Figure 1. A pairwise comparison across specific cells showed that there was no significant difference between the no cashback and flat cashback condition ($\chi^2 = 0.42, p = 0.42$). As expected, flat cashbacks do not affect the choice pattern, and the choice pattern is similar to that in the case of no cashback condition. We next compared the no cashback condition with the high cashback and low cashback condition. A comparison of no cashback with high cashback condition ($\chi^2 = 7.03, p = 0.007$) showed that in the high cashback condition, consumer preferences shifted towards buying a product of a lower price. A similar pattern was observed in the case of comparison of low cashback with no cashback case ($\chi^2 = 3.97, p = 0.046$). This shows that consumers in low cashback case also shifted towards the product at a lower price. The comparison between the low cashback and high
cashback condition showed no significant difference. As such, the results show that the introduction of cashbacks with maximum limits on cashback can impact consumer preferences towards lower priced products.

![Figure 1: Choice pattern for high priced product](image)

**References**


CONSEQUENCES OF CONSUMER BURNOUT

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Keywords: burnout, consumer behavior, advertising appeals

Description: This research aims to investigate the role of burnout and its effects on consumers’ perceptions of informational versus emotional advertisements, as well as socially versus non-socially oriented advertisements to create knowledge about the subsequent impacts on consumer behavior and purchase intent.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

The outbreak of the novel coronavirus, here on out referred to as COVID-19, has resulted in significant increases in burnout as a phenomenon in individuals. Changes in employee work life and subsequent stress levels has caused people to realize the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic has had a longer-term impact than anticipated (Kossek & Lee, 2020). Burnout is defined as having three components, categorized as exhaustion, cynicism/depersonalization, and inefficacy (Langelaan et al, 2005). These three characteristics influence one another and are all essential qualifications for understanding burnout as a whole phenomenon. Physical and emotional exhaustion, or lack of energy, explains the stress aspect of burnout and plays a role in dictating how employees may react to work overload (Maslach et al, 2001). This leads to the element of depersonalization, which develops a cynical attitude towards work when feeling overwhelmed and discouraged. Furthermore, increases in exhaustion and cynicism contributed to
growing feelings of inefficacy. This decline in feelings of personal and professional accomplishment led to a decrease in effectiveness and overall further contributed to feelings of burnout in individuals (Maslach et al, 2001). As burnout became a more prevalent phenomenon, individuals experienced burnout in all facets of life (Siwicki, 2020).

Method And Data

Previously conducted research has established many types of advertisements and dichotomies about which types of advertisements are most successful, particularly the debate between informational and emotional appeals advertisements. There has been no clear data to show that one is consistently more effective than the other, and instead relies on other mediating factors to indicate when one may be more preferable. The methodology by which these outcomes will be investigated in this particular research involves the creation and distribution of a survey to United States citizens experiencing burnout as a result of the pandemic. Survey questions will gauge participants’ consumer behavior measures as a result of their reactions to each form of advertisement. The survey will also feature a two by two design, with combinations of emotional versus informational advertisements and socially versus non-socially oriented advertisements. Each participant will be presented one of the five advertisements (four combinations and one control) and asked questions regarding their purchase intention, attitudes towards the product, and likelihood to recommend the product. The combination of presented advertisements and subsequent survey questions will provide information regarding participants’ reactions to the product and the impact that consumer burnout may have on their responses.

Summary of Findings
While this research does not presently have any finalized findings because the survey has not yet been distributed, there are a few key hypotheses we have made to begin predicting the results we expect to find from the data. Firstly, we expect that burnout will negatively affect consumer behavior. Burnout is typically discussed in the contexts of employee behavior, but it can also have similar impacts and implications when investigating the effects on consumer behavior. If individuals are feeling exhausted and overwhelmed by the pandemic, they will not be actively engaged in any aspect of their life. Therefore, burnout will negatively impact consumer attitude towards a product and their behavioral response to advertisements. Consumers suffering from burnout will feel more apathetic and lethargic so advertisements that target these emotions, either positively or negatively, will be more successful in motivating consumer behavior. Alternatively, because consumers are already feeling overwhelmed by the demands of their lives, informational advertisements may cause information overload and subsequently will not be as effective in persuading consumer behavior. Furthermore, social orientation mediates the impact of advertising appeals on consumer behavior and burnout strengthens this relationship.

**Statement of Key Contributions**

This study provides several key contributions that can be used to advance further research in both a theoretical and managerial context. First, this study addresses and advances both the Conservation of Resources (COR) and burnout theories. Originally when examining burnout theory, research focused on only one facet of burnout, but more recent studies have proven that burnout is instead a multi-faceted construct (Anaza et al, 2020). This study therefore focuses on three elements of consumer burnout - exhaustion, depersonalization, and inefficacy - and classifies each of these as mandatory characteristics of the consumer burnout phenomenon as a
whole, making this study’s results invaluable to the advancement of burnout theory. Furthermore, previous research has utilized a resource-based approach using COR theory to understand the relationships between burnout and other forms of consumer responses (Han et al, 2016). This study aims to advance the understanding of COR theory by applying this same approach specifically to consumer burnout and its relationship to consumer behavior, which has not previously been investigated. Therefore, the practical implications of these findings will allow businesses to implement more successful advertising campaigns and marketing strategies to target consumers in light of the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

References are available upon request.
Proposal for Special Session – AMA Summer Educators’ Conference 2021

TITLE

Consumer Behavior amidst and beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Description:

This session will address the overarching issue of how the COVID-19 pandemic, and its ramifications, have forever changed consumer behavior. Across four research projects, we aim to offer theoretical and managerial insights to advance our knowledge about the impact of COVID-19 on consumers’ perception of loyalty programs, social distancing practices, perceived risk of COVID-19 vaccination, and second-hand shopping behavior. Jointly, these papers contribute to the conversation of reimagining marketing in this unprecedented time, thereby addressing the theme of this conference.
Proposal

The first presentation examines firms’ decisions to cut loyalty programs during the pandemic. COVID-19 has led businesses to consider many options for cutting costs—among them, cutting the benefits of some of their loyalty program members. Findings from this research provide insight for businesses that are considering cutting loyalty program benefits. In particular, this research documents a non-obvious consequence that emerges when marketers cut the benefits of some tiers but not others: consumers whose benefits have not been cut become more satisfied with the loyalty program (compared to how satisfied they would have been had the cuts not taken place). This phenomenon transpires regardless of a consumer’s tier in the loyalty program. Moreover, this research sheds light on two psychological mechanisms that contribute to this phenomenon’s manifestation: relative value considerations and counterfactual thinking.

The second presentation examines consumers’ compliance with social distancing during COVID-19 pandemics. Despite the CDC’s strong warnings, many consumers still willingly engage in noncompliance behavior against social distancing. Marketers and policymakers have struggled to enforce these guidelines. This research uses both linguistic analysis and survey methods to examine consumer sentiment toward social distancing. Results show that political ideology, perceptions of restricted freedom, feelings of complacency resulting from low-risk perceptions and COVID fatigue, and perceived ethicality of social distancing impact compliance with social distancing. Thus, the authors suggest that marketing managers and policymakers should encourage social distancing by emphasizing the ethical choice to socially distance, which may positively impact others.

The third presentation addresses the perceived risk of COVID-19 vaccination. COVID-19 vaccines are finally being rolled out (Madani 2020). However, many people are still hesitant to
be vaccinated (Wernau 2021). Consumers’ hesitation toward the vaccination could be a huge problem globally, as at least 75% of the population needs to be vaccinated to get back to normalcy, according to Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (Powell 2020). Thus, the current research proposes the positive effect of implementing cuteness in promoting COVID-19 vaccination. Although the Japanese, Mexican, and Taiwanese governments have been using cute mascots to promote COVID-19 guidance and educate citizens, it is unclear whether implementing cuteness in COVID guidance, including COVID-19 vaccination, promotes public health behavior or not. Some might argue that cuteness would promote COVID-19 vaccination because cuteness increases individuals’ attention and exposure to cuteness increases prosocial behavior (Wang et al. 2017; Shin and Mattila 2021). On the other hand, some might argue that using cuteness could be harmful to promote COVID-19 vaccination by reducing the fear of COVID-19 and making individuals take COVID-19 less seriously. Thus, this research aims to answer the question of whether implementing cuteness can promote COVID-19 vaccination.

Lastly, the fourth presentation examines how the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced consumers’ second-hand shopping behavior. Specifically, the authors examine consumers’ COVID-19-related perceived risks as a moderator of the relationship between environmental consciousness and second-hand purchase intentions. The scare of COVID-19 profoundly impacts how consumers view risks (both cognitive and emotional risks) in their everyday life. Across a series of studies, the authors aim to uncover the mechanism by which consumers weigh the benefit of environmental-friendly second-hand consumption and the potential risks of exposure to health-related contamination concerns associated with second-hand shopping.
**Presentation 1**

*I’m Happy to See Your Benefit Go: The Impact of Reductions in Other Consumers’ Loyalty Program Benefits on Consumers’ Loyalty Program Satisfaction*

Yumei Mu, Julian Givi and Stephen He, West Virginia University

**Brief Summary:** Despite the popularity of loyalty programs among consumers, businesses affected by adverse market factors or natural events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, might consider cutting loyalty programs benefits offered to some consumers as a way to counter falling profits. For example, UnitedHealthcare, the largest health insurance company in the U.S., cut the SilverSneakers Fitness membership benefit for over 2 million customers across 14 states in an effort to reduce costs. Before such decisions are made, marketers need to evaluate the pros and cons of these cuts. Clearly, the consumers whose benefits get cut will be unhappy, but what about the consumers who will not see their benefits cut? Will their views of the loyalty program change? If so, how? This research aims to answer these questions.

**Objectives:** In the present work, we explore how a consumer’s satisfaction with a loyalty program changes when the benefits offered to their tier in the program remain constant, but the benefits offered to another tier worsen (vs. stay the same). We predict that consumers become more satisfied with a loyalty program when another tier loses (vs. does not lose) a benefit (H1). We make this prediction for two reasons (H2 and H3): First, consumers’ loyalty program satisfaction may come not only from their benefits’ absolute value, but also from their benefits’ relative value (i.e., how their benefits compare to another tier’s benefits). The relative value of consumers’ benefits is higher when another tier loses (vs. does not lose) a benefit. Second, when another tier loses a benefit (vs. keeps all of its benefits), consumers may be more likely to
counterfactually think that they themselves could have lost a benefit, thereby leading them to be more satisfied (because they did not lose anything).

**Results:** Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, we conducted three studies to test our hypotheses. Our results reveal that consumers become significantly more satisfied when the benefits granted to another tier worsen. This increase in satisfaction appears to be jointly driven by relative value considerations and counterfactual thinking.

**Contributions:** COVID-19 has led businesses to consider many options for cutting costs—among them, cutting the benefits of some of their loyalty program members. Our findings provide insight for businesses that are considering cutting loyalty program benefits. In particular, our studies document a non-obvious consequence that emerges when marketers cut the benefits of some tiers but not others: consumers whose benefits have not been cut become more satisfied with the loyalty program (vs. how satisfied they would have been had the cuts not taken place). Moreover, our studies show that this phenomenon transpires regardless of a consumer’s tier in the loyalty program, and they shed light on two psychological mechanisms that contribute to this phenomenon’s manifestation: relative value considerations and counterfactual thinking. In sum, our research offers important theoretical contributions to the loyalty program literature and is of considerable practical importance to marketers.

**Presentation 2**

**Social Distancing Rhetoric**

Vijay Payal Bharti, Elizabeth T. Gratz and M. Paula Fitzgerald, West Virginia University

**Brief Summary:** The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identifies social distancing as an important behavior to slow the spread of COVID-19. As the high counts of noncompliance indicate, marketers have struggled to enforce these guidelines. We use both
linguistic analysis and survey methods to examine consumer sentiment toward social distancing. Our results show that political ideology, perceptions of restricted freedom, feelings of complacency resulting from low-risk perceptions and COVID fatigue, and perceived ethicality of social distancing impact compliance with social distancing. Thus, we suggest marketing managers use communications encouraging social distancing that emphasize the ethical choice to socially distance, which may positively impact others.

**Objectives:** Throughout the pandemic, we have seen a surprising trend of noncompliant behavior among consumers, which is becoming more common as the pandemic progresses. We explore consumer attitudes towards social distancing using tweets and survey data to address our primary research question: What drives social distancing behavior and evaluations of communications that encourage social distancing? This study is particularly timely due to the advent of more contagious variants, which may require greater social distancing measures and enhanced compliance to prevent their spread. Despite ‘COVID fatigue,’ social distancing guidance may need to be expanded, and marketers need guidance on how to address such changes.

**Results:** Study 1 (Linguistic analysis): Individual tweets (n = 22,230) using two terms, Social Distance and COVID, were collected from March 3 to August 30, 2020. LIWC results showed significant variance in Analytic, Clout, Authentic, and Tone in consumer communications regarding social distancing. The variance indicates that consumers use a variety of rhetorical methods. Study 2 (Experimental study): Our results show that political ideology, perceptions of restricted freedom, feelings of complacency resulting from low-risk perceptions and COVID fatigue, and perceived ethicality of social distancing impact compliance with social distancing.
Contributions: We will conclude our presentation by examining the implication of our findings for marketers (broadly defined as retailers, personal services providers, healthcare providers, and restaurants) who must enforce social distancing in their servicescape. We provide guidance on communicating the ability to choose while social distancing, avoiding complacency, and that social distancing is the ethical action. For example, “Choose to protect your family and friends by social distancing” is likely to be more palatable to both conservatives and progressives than “Follow Federal Distancing Guidelines because it is necessary for our community.”

Presentation 3
Cuteness and Perceived Risk in COVID-19 Vaccination
Alexis Yim, Stephen He and Annie Peng Cui, West Virginia University

Brief Summary: COVID-19 vaccines are finally being rolled out (Madani 2020). However, some are still hesitant to be vaccinated (Wernau 2021). Consumers’ hesitation toward the vaccination could be a huge problem globally as at least 75% of the population needs to be vaccinated to get back to normalcy, according to Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (Powell 2020). Thus, the current research proposes the positive effect of implementing cuteness in promoting COVID-19 vaccination. Although the Japanese, Mexican, and Taiwanese governments have been using cute mascots to promote COVID-19 guidance and educate citizens, it is unclear whether implementing cuteness in COVID guidance, including COVID-19 vaccination indeed promotes public health behavior or not. Some might argue that cuteness would promote COVID-19 vaccination because cuteness increases individuals’ attention and exposure to cuteness increases prosocial behavior (Wang et al. 2017; Shin and Mattila 2021). On the other hand, some might argue that using cuteness could be harmful to promote COVID-19 vaccination by reducing the fear of COVID-19 and making
individuals take COVID-19 less seriously. Thus, we aim to answer the question of whether implementing cuteness can promote COVID-19 vaccination.

**Objectives:** The goals of this study are to examine the impact of cuteness on consumers’ risk perceptions and willingness to get COVID-19 vaccinations. Findings from our study advance our understanding of how to mitigate uncertainty, reduce perceived risks and assist consumers make decisions when they receive mixed information.

**Results:** To test the proposed research model, a between-subjects experiment study (conditions: cute vs. noncute) is employed to determine if consumers will be more (vs. less) likely to be willing to take COVID vaccination after exposure to one of two types of COVID-19 vaccination advertisements with a mascot in. We will manipulate the level of cuteness of the COVID-19 vaccination advertisements by using different levels of baby schema in mascots. We will also pretest the two types of mascots (cute vs. noncute). Participants will be randomly assigned to one of two conditions (cute vs. noncute). After participants view the vaccination advertisement, they will answer how likely they are to take COVID vaccination when the vaccine for COVID-19 is available for free. After participants answer the question, they will view a hypothesized COVID vaccination appointment schedule calendar to make a COVID-19 vaccine appointment.

**Contributions:** The current research adds to the emerging literature on cuteness and has an important public policy implication amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The current study provides government agencies empirical insights on how cute COVID-19 advertisements might affect consumers’ responses to COVID-19 vaccination. The findings in this study will especially benefit government agencies globally if we find a positive effect of cuteness on promoting vaccination. Government agencies can simply implement cute mascots on advertisements to promote COVID-19 vaccination in their social marketing advertisements. On the other hand, if
findings show a negative effect of cuteness on promoting the vaccination, the finding would question some government agencies’ current COVID-19 marketing campaigns implementing cute mascots. In addition to that, the finding would suggest the government agencies stop using cute mascots in their COVID-19 guidance, especially when promoting the vaccination.

**Presentation 4**


Yuerong “Cindy” Liu, Liguo Liu, Annie Cui and Jody L. Crosno, West Virginia University

**Brief Summary:** Second-hand shopping sales have been increasing for many years. The total second-hand market, which includes online resale and thrift stores (e.g., Goodwill), is expected to reach $80 billion by 2029 (Davalos 2020). Given this trend, many retailers are entering or planning to enter the second-hand market (“The Rise of Re-commerce…” 2020). IKEA, for example, is planning to open a second-hand store in Sweden (Ryan 2020). One reason for the increase in second-hand shopping is that people are more environmentally conscious (Davalos 2020; “The Rise of Re-commerce…” 2020). However, concerns about the spread of COVID-19 and surface contamination may heighten concerns about purchasing second-hand products.

**Objectives:** The goals of our study are to examine the effects of COVID-19 on second-hand purchases. Specifically, we examine consumers’ COVID-19-related perceived risks as a moderator of the relationship between environmental consciousness and second-hand purchase intentions. The scare of COVID-19 has a profound impact on how consumers view risks (both cognitive and emotional risks) in their everyday life. We conduct a series of studies to uncover the mechanism by which consumers weigh the benefit of environmental-friendly second-hand
consumption and the potential risks of exposure to health-related contamination concerns associated with second-hand shopping.

**Results:** Using PROCESS, we examine the proposed model using an online survey of U.S. consumers. In line with extant research, we find that consumers’ environmental concern is related positively to attitude toward second-hand products, and this positive relationship is moderated by perceived contamination risks. We plan to conduct a second study to explore COVID-19 perceived risks in more detail.

**Contribution:** This research contributes to the literature on second-hand consumption by examining the impact of COVID-19 on consumer second-hand purchasing behavior. This study deepens our understanding of consumer decision-making for second-hand products and provides implications for bolstering sustainable consumption during a pandemic.
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CONSUMERS’ DE-OWNERSHIP AS A PREDICTOR OF DARK-SIDE DIGITAL ACQUISITION AND DIGITAL PIRACY BEHAVIOR

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Keywords: De-ownership, digital piracy, compulsive behavior, impulsive behavior

Description: This research investigates how consumers’ orientation towards lending/renting versus buying/owning (i.e., de-ownership orientation) influences their compulsive and impulsive digital acquisition tendencies, and through them, the extent of digital piracy behavior, as well as the moderating role of collectivistic feelings and moral intensity.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

While historically consumption and ownership are considered as key contributors to and reflections of consumer identities, profound changes in how we perceive ownership have occurred. Largely due to burdens of ownership, we observe a shift from physical possessions to mere access to goods and services. Modern technologies and peer-to-peer communities have enabled consumers to participate in sharing economy by renting/lending/sharing possessions through various platforms (Airbnb, Uber) and access-based services. Indeed, collaborative consumption is a key feature of the sharing economy and represents an economic model based on sharing, swapping, trading, or renting products and services, enabling access over ownership.
Another recent consumer trend relates to the emerging dark-side consumer behaviors, particularly online. Previous research investigated behaviors such as digital hoarding, digital piracy, Internet addiction, compulsive computer use and compulsive online buying. However, there is a gap in investigating both major trends together. Hence, in this research we examine the effects of consumers’ de-ownership on dark-side digital acquisition behavior (i.e., digital piracy) through their compulsive and impulsive digital acquisition tendencies. In addition, we examine two conditions under which these effects occur: moral intensity (perceived social impact of dark side behaviors) and collectivism (emphasis on in-group loyalty and group membership).

**Method and Data**

An online survey conducted via Qualtrics platform using a consumer panel in the U.S. tests the proposed conceptual model. The sample includes 412 individuals (average age 34 years, 67% male, 11% completed high school or less, 30% had some college, 59% had a college degree or higher, 54% of participants lived in households with annual income of $50,000 or less). Four items based on Lindblom and Lindblom (2017) measured consumer’s orientation towards de-ownership. Compulsive digital acquisition measure consisted of five items adapted from the habits measure by Limayem, Khalifa and Chin (2004). Impulsive digital acquisition measure consisted of six items based on Sweeten, Sillence, and Neave (2018) and Nordsletten et al. (2013) and adapted to the digital context. Moral intensity was measured with two items pertaining to social acceptability and negative social consequences of illegally downloading files (Singhapakdi et al., 1996; McMahon & Harvey, 2006). Collectivism was measured with four items based on Yoo, Donthu, and Lenartowicz (2011). Frequency of digital piracy behavior was measured as a number of units the respondent downloaded without permission across various digital categories within the previous month (Kos Koklic, Kukar-Kinney, & Vida, 2016).
Summary of Findings

The results indicate a significant and positive effect of de-ownership on both compulsive digital acquisition and on impulsive digital acquisition. The findings also show that as consumers’ compulsive acquisition tendency increases, so does their digital piracy behavior, and that increases in consumers’ impulsive acquisition tendency lead to increases in digital piracy behavior. The indirect effect of de-ownership orientation on digital piracy behavior is significant both through compulsive digital acquisition as well as through impulsive digital acquisition. Further, the moderating role of moral intensity and collectivistic feelings is supported. Specifically, as moral intensity increases, the positive effect of de-ownership orientation decreases. On the other hand, as feelings of collectivism increase, the positive effect of de-ownership orientation increases. Thus, perceptions of moral intensity reduce the effect of de-ownership orientation on digital piracy, while collectivistic feelings enhance this effect. The magnitude of the effects obtained in the mediated moderation analysis indicates that a majority of the moderated effect for both moderators is mediated through compulsive digital acquisition tendency, and a smaller portion through impulsive digital acquisition.

Key Contributions

This work contributes to research on consumers’ dark-side behaviors (i.e., compulsive buying, Internet addiction, compulsive computer use and digital piracy) and research on collaborative consumption and sharing economy. It is the first research to combine the two research streams and conceptualize consumers’ de-ownership orientation as a driver of dark-side digital behaviors. Another theoretical contribution is made by extending research on compulsive and impulsive consumer behaviors by conceptualizing digital acquisition tendency as consisting of compulsive and impulsive dimensions. Further contribution is made by developing a theoretical model
linking the above constructs and identifying two moderators: moral intensity and collectivism. The implications for marketers and public policy makers include identification of ways in which the effects of de-ownership orientation on dark-side consumers’ responses can be managed. One option is to create marketing campaigns focused on increasing consumers’ perceptions of negative consequences of digital piracy for the society and its more vulnerable members (e.g., smaller companies, individual artists). Such campaigns can be also aimed at decreasing perceptions of collectivism through increasing perceptions of individual/personal responsibility. Further, consumers should be educated about negative consequences of dark-side digital behaviors, with a stronger focus on reducing the compulsive (relative to impulsive) digital acquisition.

References are available upon request.
DOES DISTANCE MAKE THE HEART GROW FONDER? HOW PRODUCT-MODEL SPATIAL DISTANCE AND AD APPEAL INFLUENCE PRODUCT EVALUATION

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Keywords: Spatial Distance, Advertising appeal, Desirability, Feasibility, Processing fluency, Product evaluation

Description: The horizontal distance between images of a product and a model in conjunction with desirability/feasibility ad appeal impacts consumers’ product evaluation.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Using a spokesperson to promote the product in an ad is a common marketing strategy (Poor, Duhachek, and Krishnan 2013). Besides the relative position of the product and spokesperson in the layout, the spatial distance between those two images in the ad can be controlled relatively easily. Does the distance between the images of the product and model influence consumer evaluations of the product?

Prior research has suggested that the closer together the images of the model and the product, the more likely it is that the brand evaluation will be positive (Huang, Li, and Zhang 2013), and the more effective the product is judged to be (Chae, Li, and Zhu 2013). Despite
the suggestion of prior research that spatial proximity is more beneficial, the current study aims to determine the effectiveness of horizontal distance—both distal and proximal—in conjunction with certain ad appeals (desirability focus vs. feasibility focus).

Drawing on the construal fit hypothesis (Lee, Keller, and Sternthal 2010), we propose that matching distal (proximal) product-model distance and desirability (feasibility) should activate a congruent process of thinking—high-level (low-level)—leading to more positive intentions and behaviors. Processing fluency is proposed as the mechanism underlying the interaction effect.

**Method and Data**

Two lab experiments (Studies 1 and 2) and one field experiment (Study 3) were conducted to test interaction effect between product-model distance and ad appeal. We had a 2 (product-model distance: distal vs. proximal) × 2 (ad appeal: desirability focus vs. feasibility focus) between-subjects design in three studies using different stimuli and dependent variables. In Study 1, we manipulated the product-model distance in the ad by juxtaposing the image of the laptop and the figure of a male spokesperson either distally or proximally. Desirability/feasibility focused messages were depicted in the ad. Attitudes toward the product and purchase intention were used as the dependent variable.

Similar to Study 1, in Study 2, we manipulated the distance of images of a flaxseed oil supplement and a male (female) spokesperson in the ad with ad appeal. Besides attitudes toward the product and purchase intention, we added effectiveness judgement as the dependent variable. In Study 3, the stimuli were print ads containing the image of a yogurt and a female spokesperson with ad appeal. We conducted Study 3 in a field setting, using a real brand in a real shopping scenario with the actual amount spent as the dependent variable.
Summary of Findings

The current research suggests that when the ad focuses on a context that is congruent with the spatial distance and matches the consumer’s construal level, a distal product-model distance with a desirability focus can result in a more effective judgment (Study 2), a more favorable attitude and higher purchase intention (Studies 1 and 2), more importantly, a higher actual amount spent (Study 3). We further confirmed the mediation role of processing fluency in the relationship between product-model distance and ad appeals (Study 3).

Key Contributions

This study adds to the research stream regarding spatial distance and advertising effectiveness. We expand the explorations on physical distance through construal level theory, enriched construal level theory and explore a new research path regarding physical distance and advertising effectiveness by extending our knowledge regarding the effect of ad appeal on the horizontal juxtaposition of product and model images.

The current research offers rich managerial implications for non-academic stakeholder. It provides further evidence of the importance of visual cues in print and screen advertisements. We have demonstrated that modify the distance between the model and product changes the implied relationship between the consumer and the product, and proper usage of text can easily frame the appeal as one of desirability or feasibility. Marketers who understand this relationship can better combine the elements to ensure cohesiveness between their intended message and appeal. This will allow them to maximize the effectiveness of their ad campaign.
DOWNLOAD THIS APP FOR OUR OWN SAKE: FACTORS INFLUENCING USERS’ DOWNLOAD INTENTION

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Keywords: download intention, social empowerment, privacy calculus framework, perceived information transparency, perceived information control

Description: This paper investigated the download intention towards a contact tracing app using the concept of social empowerment within a privacy calculus framework and other relevant factors such as perceived information transparency, perceived information control, and attitudes towards government.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question
The introduction of a contact tracing app was a crucial step to gradually support businesses and consumers resuming an extent of normality. Although scholars have investigated the use of mobile health app regarding privacy issues (Guo, Zhang, & Sun, 2016; Hussain et al., 2018), a contact tracing app has a unique standing considering the circumstances surrounding its application during the COVID-19 pandemic. Chan and Saqib (2021) investigated the download intention of this app, however, their study focused on government intrusion concerns. Therefore, there is a gap in the literature to further investigate the download intention towards a contact tracing app in providing nuanced insights for marketing scholars and practitioners.

To address the gap, this study adopted privacy calculus framework where perceived privacy risks and social empowerment as the benefit emerged from adopting the app were investigated. This study also investigated how perceived information transparency, perceived information control, government intrusion concern, and trust in government affect the download intention. The study aims to answer the question of: what are the causal asymmetrical relationships of the proposed factors in influencing users’ download intention of a contact tracing app? To achieve this, this study adopted a fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) method.

Method and Data
We adopted a purposive snowball sampling methodology to collect data to ensure participants are aware of the contact tracing app in England. We circulated the survey to Facebook groups that are interested in the affairs surrounding the National Health Service (NHS) in the UK and are aware of the app.
The survey consists of questions related to the measures of perceived information transparency – TRP (Awad & Krishnan, 2006), perceived information control – PIC (Xu, 2007), government intrusion concern – GIC (Dinev et al., 2008), trust in government – TG (Krasnova & Veltri, 2010), social empowerment – SE (Hanson & Yuan, 2018), perceived privacy risks – PPR (Kehr et al., 2015) and download intention – DI (Gu et al., 2017). The survey adopted reflective scales using a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (‘Strongly disagree’) to 7 (‘Strongly agree’).

A total of 180 valid responses were collected. To proceed with fsQCA, the measures were calibrated into fuzzy sets with continuous values ranging from 0 to 1, in which three thresholds were set based on the value of a 7-point Likert scale: full membership at 7, full non-membership at 1, and the cross-over point at 4. A truth table was later generated, followed by a standard analysis to produce intermediate solutions.

**Summary of Findings**

The intermediate solutions show that there are 8 causal pathways for configurations leading to an outcome of the presence of DI. The first configuration indicates that despite the absence of TG, a DI is achievable when PPR is absent, and PIC is present. The second solution shows that even when TG is absent, the presence of PIC and SE can still generate a DI. The third configuration points that when TG is absent, the presence of SE and absence of PPR are sufficient for a DI. The fourth configuration implies that the presence of TRP and PIC with the absence of PPR derive a DI. The fifth configuration exhibits the combination of TRP, TG, and SE results in a DI. The sixth configuration shows that the absence of GIC and PPR and the presence of SE leads to a DI. The seventh pathway indicates that even when TG and TRP are absent, the presence of SE and absence of GIC are sufficient for a DI. The last configuration shows that the absence of GIC and presence of PPR, combined with the presence of TG and
SE, generate a DI. We also found that five out of six reversed constructs (from presence to absence and vice versa) of our propositions are quasi-necessary conditions to the absence of DI. However, the presence of TRP is a quasi-necessary construct to an absence of DI.

**Key Contributions**

This study makes a three-fold contribution to the existing literature: (1) This study highlights the adaptability of privacy calculus framework in understanding privacy-related attitudes and behaviors in various circumstances. As the context of study changes, the adaptability of this framework is crucial. Using the generic benefit of downloading the app is unlikely to draw the most accurate insights from participants compared with specifically using social empowerment. (2) The adoption of social empowerment adds to extant marketing studies related to customer empowerment (Acar & Puntoni, 2016; Auh et al., 2019; Hanson & Yuan, 2018) an empirical perspective of how empowerment can work in influencing technology adoption. (3) Using fsQCA, we also highlight the fluidity of constructs within their asymmetrical relationships with each other in which we further confirmed the double-edged role of perceived information transparency as previously suggested by other scholars.

There are other non-profit- or government-owned apps for emergency purposes (e.g., ‘what3words’). Therefore, policymakers and app developers can draw insights from our study to adjust their communication strategies to either ensure users’ positive behavioral intentions or to avoid negative behavioral intentions.

References are available upon request.
E-COMMERCE AND SHOPPERS’ EVOLUTION POST COVID-19

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Keywords: COVID-19, pandemic, E-commerce, online shopping, typology

Description: This exploratory qualitative study explores the different categories of e-commerce platforms’ users and propose a distinctive customer typology in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

The COVID-19 pandemic has been shaping the marketing world, creating a new normal that companies are striving to adapt to. It has been changing both businesses' go to market strategies and consumers' shopping behavior. Particularly, shoppers were bound to switch rapidly to e-commerce platforms, forcing businesses to take immediate actions. To achieve cost efficiency and sustain survival, businesses had to concentrate on fast-growing information technology (Abebe, 2020; Laato et al., 2020). Retailers have incorporated technology into their physical in-stores to retain their competitive edge by incorporating the idea of clicking and collecting (Farah and Ramadan, 2020). Consumers living through a pandemic could have a long-lasting shift in consumer behavior (Kim, 2020).

E-commerce has gained growing interest among companies because it provides a large array of economic benefits to customers (Zhang et al., 2017). This research examines the various consumer groups of e-commerce platforms. In the age of the COVID-19 pandemic, it proposes an initial typology of users. This study also aims to explore the different strategies that within similar market conditions can be implemented by businesses.

Method and Data

To better understand how consumers’ shopping behavior and corporate strategies were affected by the spread of COVID-19, 33 participants were interviewed for this study, including 27 consumers and 16 experts in e-commerce. An exploratory qualitative research design was adopted due to the novelty of the subject. Due to the spread of the COVID-19, all the in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted using the Zoom online meeting platforms. Each interview lasted an
average of 38 minutes. The sample followed a pre-selection criterion to ensure that each consumer shopped online at least one time during the COVID-19 period. The consumer interviewees’ gender split was equal, and their age ranged from 21 to 38 years. On the other hand, the expert participants included professionals with a variety of relevant roles, such as store managers, IT managers, financial analysts, retail managers, e-commerce merchandise managers, and business owners. All the experts had a minimum of 8 years of experience in e-commerce. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded. Data analysis was performed on the verbatim transcriptions of all the interviews. Validity was ensured through triangulation

**Summary of Findings**

The use of e-commerce platforms has been analyzed from the point of view of both clients and experts. This paper examines the effect of e-commerce usage throughout the pandemic on consumer purchasing behavior and company operating strategies during times of high market volatility. It gives a new viewpoint on the forthcoming post-COVID-19 market structure, complementing the ensuing rising concern in the field of e-commerce and shifting customer behavior. Indeed, the spread of the pandemic has altered consumer behavior in diverse ways, while at the same time refining companies’ strategies.

With the spread of COVID-19, some consumers and businesses kept their traditional behaviors and practices, while countless others have shifted their focus towards online platforms in a way to fight back the consequences of the pandemic. During the virus outbreak, two key stages of e-commerce platforms’ usage were identified for both consumers and businesses.

According to the findings, it is expected that the usage of e-commerce post pandemic would defer depending on the type of users. Indeed, during the pandemic, online shopping behavior was
already distinct from a consumer to another, which allowed for the development of a prospective typology of e-commerce users post COVID-19.

Key Contributions

This study paper is one of the first to define the various phases, while suggesting an innovative typology of users of the e-commerce platform during and after COVID-19. Amid the global health pandemic, companies have been forced to hastily switch their full business model to e-commerce. While many studies have tackled the Covid-19 virus and its effect on businesses, no research has tackled yet the post pandemic reality that may ensue given the changing behavior of shoppers and companies alike. Accordingly, through a mix of experts and consumers’ interviews, this study explored the different stages of e-commerce usage that developed during the pandemic, and proposes a typology of e-commerce shoppers post Covid-19. From a scholarly perspective, this paper fills a sizeable gap in the literature as it tackles the impact of market uncertainty on consumers’ shopping behavior and businesses’ operating techniques during and post pandemic. From a managerial perspective, strategies are suggested and discussed per each of the identified e-commerce shoppers.

References are available upon request.
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND MATERIALISM: THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

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Keywords: Subjective well-being, Materialism, Emotional intelligence, Satisfaction with life, Affect balance

Description: This is the first representative study in Lithuania revealing the links among consumer materialism, subjective well-being and emotional intelligence.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research question

A great variety of research carried out in different age groups and cultural contexts leads to unambiguous conclusions that identify a negative link between inclination to materialism and one’s subjective well-being (Dittmar et al., 2014; Shrum et al., 2014; Moldes and Ku, 2020). However, literature does not rule out the possibility of a reverse relationship by employing subjective well-being indicators such as satisfaction with life (Lambert et al., 2009), self-esteem (Chaplin and John, 2007), feeling of self-doubt (Chang and Arkin, 2002), or experience of chronic stress (Liu, Zhao and Liu, 2018). In addition, studies report a negative link between emotional intelligence and various forms of behavioral addiction (Kun and Demetrovics, 2010). Though materialism has been reported as a predictor of various forms of maladaptive buying behavior (Ruvio, Somer and Rindfleisch, 2014; Harnish et al., 2019), the present knowledge on emotional intelligence as an explanatory factor for materialistic developments is sparse. We address the above research gap by exploring the indirect effects of emotional intelligence on materialism through the intervening variable of subjective well-being. We propose that emotional intelligence adversely affects materialism through its relationship with subjective well-being. Our key research questions are: how does emotional intelligence influence subjective well-being, and how subjective well-being, in turn, relates to materialistic inclinations?

Method and Data

In this study, a survey questionnaire has been developed, pretested and digitally distributed among individuals over 18 years old living in Lithuania. This study relies on a professional online research panel and uses CAWI method to gather the data, while using a pre-screening methodology for
respondents' attentiveness. To do so, we employed stratified random sampling approach and used the age (18-65) and gender (female vs. male) as the strata. The dataset comprises 1000 respondents (of those, 506 (50.6%) were females and 494 (49.4%) were males). We collected measures for different constructs from different sources. The non-response bias was assessed through the t-test and we compared the average scores for the main variables of the first quartile of the respondents and the last quartile of the respondents, as recommended by Lau et al. (2010). We did not find any significant differences between the mean scores of the two groups. Following that, we examined the non-response bias test based on the respondents’ age and gender, and no major differences between the responding and non-responding respondents were found. To test a difference in the two proportions (initial sample and effective sample), we computed two-tailed test. The results, based on the Z scores and with respect to all demographic information, showed that two proportions do not differ significantly. To measure the constructs in the proposed research model, we used previously established and validated scales.

**Summary of Findings**

The relationship between EI and satisfaction with life and between EI and affect balance both are positive and significant. Also we found that the effect of satisfaction with life on materialism is significant and negative. Interestingly, the effect of affect balance on materialism is significant, and, as expected, the effect is negative.

Regarding the mediation effects of satisfaction with life and affect balance on the path between EI and materialism, the SEM results reveal interesting outcomes. The total effect value between EI and materialism is negative and significant. Moreover, the results show that the total indirect effects between EI and materialism are significant and negative. Moreover, the mediation results
indicate that the specific indirect effects between EI, satisfaction with life and materialism are significant and negative, and between EI, affect balance and materialism also significant and negative. Therefore, we conclude that the path between EI and materialism is partially mediated by both dimensions of subjective well-being (i.e., satisfaction with life and affect balance).

Some of the respondents’ demographic characteristics such as gender and age were used as control variables to see if further insights could be gained. We ran the hypothesized model against these variables and found only one group difference. For example, when the age of the respondents is used as a control variable, the SEM results reveal that the effect of affect balance to materialism is significant only for those below the average age, i.e., 42.11 years old. Regarding the gender variable, the SEM results do not demonstrate any differences between females and males.

**Key Contributions**

The current study extends the literature on the relatively under-investigated antecedents of materialism – emotional intelligence and subjective well-being, respectively. The current research fills the gap by exploring the potential mechanisms that might account for the relationship between emotional intelligence and materialism and explaining how this link may occur. Within our representative empirical research we contribute to the consumer materialism literature while exploring the indirect effects of emotional intelligence on materialism through the subjective well-being.

Research findings suggest some social implications. Taken together, emotional intelligence presumably functions as the protecting factor against materialistic inclinations through increase in life satisfaction and affect balance. Thus, the development of emotional intelligence abilities
through education programs may contribute to a more sustainable and healthier lifestyle by preventing materialistic strivings, accompanied by maladaptive behavioral consequences.

References are available on request.

**Acknowledgment:** This project has received funding from the Research Council of Lithuania (LMTLT), agreement No. S-MIP-20-12.
EXAMINING SITUATIONAL SKEPTICISM DUE TO HEALTH-RELATED CLAIMS ON PACKAGED FOOD PRODUCTS AND ITS EFFECT ON PRODUCT PURCHASE INTENTION

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Key Words: Skepticism, situational skepticism, health-related claims, health food

Description: This paper examines the effect of health-related claim type and product healthiness on situational skepticism towards claims and product purchase intention.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Questions

The objective of this research is to examine the effect of health-related claim type and product healthiness on situational skepticism towards claims and product purchase intention. Following research questions were answered as a part of this research:

Q1) How do health-related claim types (Nutrition, health, highlighted ingredient) influence situational skepticism towards the claim?

Q2) How does product healthiness (healthy or unhealthy) influence situational skepticism towards the claim?

Q3) How does the effect of claim type vary with product healthiness?
Q4) How does the situational skepticism effect the relationship between claim type, product healthiness and product purchase intention?

**Method and Data**

Two experimental studies were conducted using a 3x2 Between-subjects factorial design with three levels of health-related claims (health claim, nutrition claim, and ingredient claim) and two levels of product healthiness (healthy and unhealthy). The first study investigated the effects within a single product category (biscuit) and the second study investigated the effects across product categories (muesli and chips).

**Summary of Findings**

The results of both the studies demonstrate that situational skepticism is highest for the health claim, followed by nutrition claim, and least for the ingredient claim. Further, the situational skepticism is higher for claims appearing on unhealthy compared to healthy products. Moreover, situational skepticism mediates the relationship between claim type, product healthiness, and product purchase intention.

**Key Contributions**

This work advances the research on skepticism and Theory of Persuasion (Friestad and Wright, 1994). Topic knowledge structures (from Theory of Persuasion) of claim and product attributes have been shown to cause situational skepticism. The claim and product attributes are general topic knowledge structures related to almost all consumer contexts. Hence, this work paves way for examining situational skepticism in diverse contexts beyond where it has been traditionally studied (cause-related marketing, corporate social responsibility, and environmental claims). Moreover, for the first time, situational skepticism is examined in the context of health-related claims. Also, the studies show that verifiable ingredient claims attract...
lesser skepticism compared to difficult to verify nutrition and health claims. Hence, it advances the Theory of Economics of Information (Ford, Smith and Swasy, 1990).

This work also provides clarity to the marketers by suggesting that ingredient claims lead to lower skepticism and are accepted better by consumers. Therefore, given a choice between chemical fortification (nutrition claim) and natural ingredient addition (ingredient claim), natural ingredients should be chosen. Health claims should be avoided as much as possible.

Further in this research, consumers are found to be least skeptical of ingredient claims. Ingredient claims are not regulated in many countries. Hence, there is an urgent need for policy measures to prevent consumers from being misled by inappropriate ingredient claims.
EXPANDING SELF-EXTENSION THEORY IN THE INTERNET OF THINGS

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Key words: Self-extension, Multidimensional, Assemblage theory, Internet of Things

Description:
By integrating assemblage theory and through an analysis of interview data, this study develops an augmented conceptualization of self-extension, possessing three dimensions.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Technologies are creating a hyperconnected world which shape people's personalities and relationships. Self-extension theory seeks to explain the relationship between consumers and objects; however, it was conceptualized before the Internet of Things era. This study reviews previous studies of self-extension and integrates assemblage theory to develop an augmented conceptualization of self-extension. Through an analysis of interview data, self-extension is conceptualized as possessing three dimensions, namely: capability, identity, and affective.

The current paper presents the foundational stage of an augmented self-extension framework by conducting a qualitative study, and this research will be further extended with a scale development procedure.

Research Question
Belk (1988, p.139) introduced the concept of self-extension, arguing that ‘knowingly or unknowingly, intentionally or unintentionally, we regard our possessions as parts of ourselves’. Self-extension theory seeks to explain how individuals regard their possessions as part of themselves and understand consumer-possession relationships (Belk 1988). Subsequent studies apply self-extension theory and conclude that an individual's self can be extended to a variety of tangible and non-tangible objects around us. The IoT environment and smart objects change the way people communicate and interact with technologies. It is important to understand how such features change consumers’ relationships with their possessions and how individuals imbue objects with meaning and extend their identities accordingly (Hoffman and Novak 2018). Thus, the concept of self-extension should be revisited.

Recently, researchers adopted assemblage theory to explain consumer experiences in the IoT environment, suggesting that the consumer-objects assemblage emerges from interactions between consumers and smart objects (Hoffman and Novak 2018; Novak and Hoffman, 2019). Drawing on assemblage theory, this study proposes an augmented self-extension framework for explaining not only the relationship between consumers and possessions/other people, but also the relationship between the consumer and the consumer-object assemblage.

**Method and Data**

Due to the fluid boundaries of self-extension, and the complexity of how self-extension affects consumer behavior, an exploratory study with depth interviews of smart technology consumers was undertaken. Respondents discussed their experiences and relationships with smart technologies during semi-structured interviews. Three participants were interviewed for a pilot study. Interviewees were recruited from the authors' social networks, as well as recommendations from those already interviewed (snowball sampling). All interviews were
conducted by the lead author via online platforms. In total, 23 interviews were conducted and recorded with a diverse range of ages, occupations, and ethnicities.

Following the steps recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis was undertaken with Nvivo software used for data coding, analyzing, and structuring. Both semantic and latent coding approaches were adopted to generate codes. A sample of seven interview transcripts were coded independently by two other marketing researchers to assess consistency. Following the approach recommended by Perreault and Leigh (1989), inter-judge reliability was calculated as 0.885, which is above the threshold of 0.70 recommended for exploratory studies (Rust and Cooil 1994).

Summary of Findings

Based on the analysis, three dimensions that capture consumers' perceived self-extension with smart technologies were identified:

Dimension 1 Capability: focuses on functional aspects and refers to a consumer either outsourcing or delegating some of his/her capability to the consumer-objects assemblage, or the consumer enlarging his/her capability by incorporating the capability of the consumer-objects assemblage into one's self.

Dimension 2: Identity: An individual can perceive identity self-extension though both an expressional approach – by expressing the consumer-objects assemblage as a self-presentation to others; and a reflectional approach – by co-constructing self-identify based on others' reflection on the consumer-object assemblage.

Dimension 3: Affective: focuses on emotional attachment between the consumer and the object. By becoming part of the consumer-object assemblage, the consumer extends his/her mechanisms to express emotion/feelings to either other people or the objects, as well as
became more psychologically depended on the consumer-object assemblage and he/she fears losing such a connection.

Key Contributions

This study explores self-extension in the IoT environment augmenting assemblage theory (DeLanda 2007, 2016; Deleuze and Guattari 2004; Hoffman and Novak 2018). It conceptualizes that consumers not only extend themselves on to possessions, but also extend themselves into consumer-objects assemblages in the hyperconnected society. Based on in-depth interview evidence, the study identifies three dimensions of consumer self-extension: capability, identity, and affective. This study reveals the multi-dimensional nature of self-extension, which can lead to the development of an updated measurement scale. This is warranted given the lack of alternative scales for measuring consumer-smart object interactions, reflecting that measurement scales often lag changes in marketing practice and theory, considering the time needed for constructs to be developed, disseminated, and accepted (Maklan and Klaus 2011).

The augmented self-extension framework generates insights for managers in smart device industries. Specifically, the study suggests that technology companies in an IoT environment should not only focus on the functions of their products but also design consumer interactions with technologies considering the three dimensions of self-extension.

References are available upon request.
FRAMING BRAND MISBEHAVIOR: THE EFFECTS OF MORAL INTENSITY FRAMES ON BOYCOTT INTENTION

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Keywords: boycott intention; framing; moral intensity; experiment; structural equation modeling

Description: This exploratory study investigates the influence of news framing of unethical brand behavior on consumer boycott intention.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

The way a brand’s unethical behavior is framed in the news may influence its customers’ reaction, potentially inciting outrage and changing their relationship with the brand. Consumer boycotters identify the news media as a primary source for learning about unethical brand conduct (Neilson 2010) and consumer advocates often draw attention to brand misconduct by using the media (Friedman 1999). However, scholarship has not previously considered how the framing of a brand’s unethical behavior in the news influences consumers’ boycott intention. This study explores how the framing of a brand’s unethical behavior in the news influences
consumer behavior. It specifically examines the effects of high and low moral intensity frames on boycott intention. *Moral intensity* refers to the degree of vividness and salience that is ascribed to an ethical issue (Jones 1991). An issue with *high moral intensity* is seen as unethical, has severe consequences that are certain to happen in the immediate future, and will have a concentrated negative effect on a small number of people who are seen as socially, psychologically, or geographically close to the boycotter (Frey 2000; Jones 1991). The study primarily hypothesized that when a real brand’s misbehavior is reported in the news using a high moral intensity frame versus a low moral intensity frame, the brand’s customers are likely to report greater boycott intention, which will be mediated by their perceived moral intensity, moral awareness, and attitude toward the brand.

**Method and Data**

A single-factor one-message experiment was used in which participants were randomly assigned to read a news article that used high moral intensity framing or low moral intensity framing to report a fictitious labor violation committed by a real U.S. retail brand. The study stimuli were edited versions of real news articles that used high and low moral intensity frames to describe the brand’s misbehavior. The stimuli were pretested and yielded substantial agreement between the two coders, Krippendorff’s α = .83, Scott’s pi = .822, percent agreement = 91.7%.

Participants read their respective article and completed items measuring perceived moral intensity, moral awareness, attitude toward the brand, and boycott intention. The manipulation check of the stimuli on a 7-point scale showed that both articles were viewed as credible (high moral intensity: $M = 4.18$, $SD = 1.66$; low moral intensity: $M = 4.51$, $SD = 1.6$). All participants
were debriefed at the end of the study because the stimuli used a real brand committing a manufactured violation.

The study used validated data from the brand’s U.S. customers (N = 218) who were recruited from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk. Participants were mainly male (52.3%) and were between 24 years old and 69 years old (M = 41.26, SD = 10.47). Most identified as White (n = 173, 79.4%) and indicated they have a bachelor’s degree (n = 92, 42.8%).

**Summary of Findings**

Customers exposed to the high moral intensity frame reported higher boycott intention than those exposed to the low moral intensity frame. However, boycott intention was low for both groups despite customers reporting a moderately high level of moral awareness. Customers’ perception of the moral intensity frames was low and did not significantly differ across the two groups. The study revealed that the positive impact of a moral intensity frame on boycott intention is completely mediated by customers’ moral awareness and perceived moral intensity. Furthermore, relative to moral awareness, perceived moral intensity has a substantially large mediatory effect on customers’ boycott intention. This finding is consistent with Entman’s (1993) argument that the efficacy of a frame will depend on how the audience perceives or detects the frame.

**Key Contributions**

This study provides a preliminary explanation for why certain news stories about brand misbehavior (do not) elicit the desired boycott response. The audience’s perception of the frame is central to the response to the message. This study is therefore another confirmation of
Entman’s (1993) framing theory, and it extends the application of framing to the context of unethical brand behavior and consumer boycott behavior. Its findings highlight the need to further explore how different frames of brand misbehavior may impact consumer behaviors such as boycotting.

References are available upon request.
FRIENDS WITH BENEFITS: STRENGTHENING PEER EFFECTS THROUGH ALIGNING SALIENT REFERENCE GROUP CHARACTERISTICS WITH CONSUMERS’ TRAITS

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Keywords: Social Norms, Peer Effects, Social Identity Theory, Consumer Behavior, Source Credibility

Description: Strengthening peer effects through aligning reference group characteristics social identification and source credibility with consumers’ susceptibility to normative and informational influence, respectively, in social norm interventions to improve retirement engagement.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Sharing information about peers’ behavior has been shown to influence a subject’s behavior across many domains, including the financial domain (e.g. retirement engagement, saving). However,
such interventions have not always, and not for everyone, been effective. Peer effect interventions have not only been ineffective for some, but have even backfired for others, where subjects shift their behavior away from salient peer behavior. Why do the same peer effect interventions trigger behavioral change for some, but not for others? We propose and show that the alignment of specific reference group characteristics to specific consumer traits underlies the effectiveness of peer effect interventions in a series of lab, online, and field experiments. Specifically, we identify and apply this alignment of specific reference group characteristics to specific consumer traits for both the normative and informational channels of influence. We test whether subjects’ perceived social identification with and source credibility of reference groups interact with subjects’ susceptibilities to normative and informational influence, in driving convergence to peer behavior in peer effect interventions.

**Method and Data**

First, in study 1, we identify, using a discrete-choice conjoint, which reference group attributes (e.g., age, gender) and their levels (e.g., 26-35 year olds, 36-45 year olds) have the largest impact on social identification and source credibility as perceived by a broad sample of pension fund participants (N=1,466). Study 1’s broad sample allows us to identify the importance of specific attributes and specific attribute levels for specific groups of subjects (e.g. specific age groups). In studies 2 and 3, we translate these results into retirement planning peer effect interventions in the lab (N=220) and with an online panel (N=1,161), respectively, where we manipulate the social identification and source credibility of reference groups in the interventions, and test whether peer effects from high social identification and high source credibility groups are conditional on subjects’ susceptibility to normative and susceptibility to informational influence. In study 4, we test our theory with retirement engagement behavior in the field (N=222,596), testing whether
higher social identification with and source credibility of reference groups, through tailored peer effect interventions (where we manipulate reference group, without deception) targeting subsets of a heterogeneous population, changes the peer effect strength.

Summary of Findings

In study 1, we find that age of a reference group has the highest importance for driving both social identification with as well as source credibility of reference groups, for all subjects. However, the specific level of reference group age driving social identification and source credibility differs. Reference groups with the same age score highest on social identification, for all age groups of subjects. Reference groups of older age score highest on source credibility, for subjects aged 26-45 years old. For subjects aged 46-65 years old, same age reference groups score highest on source credibility. In studies 2 and 3, we find that higher social identification with a reference group results in norm convergence only if subjects’ susceptibility to normative influence is high. In study 4, we find that higher social identification with and source credibility of reference groups, through peer effect interventions tailored to individual subjects, strengthens the peer effect. Compared to a control condition and a generic peer effect condition commonly used in industry, the tailored peer effect conditions in our field experiment increased engagement by 31 to 55 per cent. Subjects’ engagement in the generic peer effect condition was no different from the control condition.

Key Contributions

We propose and show that the alignment of specific salient reference group characteristics to specific subject traits underlies the effectiveness of peer effect interventions in a series of lab, online, and field experiments. By addressing this heterogeneity in the population, we address the recent puzzle of oppositional reactions found in social norm interventions, and also the overall mixed results from prior interventions. We add to literature streams in normative and informational
influence, social proof and peer effects, and social identification and source credibility measurement instruments. We inform policymakers on which reference groups to use generally, and which to use specifically for particular (e.g. younger, older, specific work sector, gender) subjects, when executing peer effect interventions, to ensure effective behavioral change without oppositional reactions away from the (desirable) peer behavior. Our final field experiment (N=222,596) was run with a large financial institution in a financial decision-making context, and will therefore be particularly interesting for for-profit, non-profit, and governmental agencies addressing financial decision-making and financial well-being. Our results also have implications for social norm interventions generally, and therefore have relevance for stakeholders in other domains where social norm interventions are being employed.
TEENAGERS’ SELF-PRESENTATION AND BRAND IDENTIFICATION ON INSTAGRAM: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

Statement of Key Contributions

This research studies self-presentation and brand identification among teenagers aged 14-17 on Instagram. Thirty individual interviews were conducted and revealed the importance of a form of self-profile consistency among teenagers, the quest for beauty on this social network as well as the role of brands in teenagers’ self-presentation. In terms of contributions, this research offers a rich comprehension of the use of Instagram by teenagers, namely regarding motivations to post and relationships with brands. More specifically, three results emerge from the research. First, the analysis shows that adolescents alternate between two types of publications on Instagram when it comes to posting. There is indeed a difference between the images published to capture good times—following a positive moment—and those more focused on aesthetic—following an organized photo session among friends. Adolescents’ posts are therefore both spontaneous and planned, a finding that contributes to the understanding of this generation’s online behavior (Yau and Reigh 2018). Second, a quest for beauty in the use of Instagram by teenagers is observed because what is “beautiful” seems to be both a motivation and criterion before publishing a picture at various levels, depending on how important it is for the teenager. This finding is consistent with the importance of visual aesthetics on Instagram (Kusumasondjaja 2019). Third, teenagers do not seem to turn to brands for self-presentation but more toward pictures that are consistent with them, their interests, activities or significant events of their lives, confirming a form of self-consistency between adolescents’ profile and their self-concept (Sirgy, 1982). This research is likely to interest brands that target the Gen Z and that wish to improve their ability to reach them on Instagram.
Extended abstract

Introduction
Social networks allow for self-expression and the development of one’s virtual identity (Schau and Gilly 2003). They are especially interesting for teenagers who are concerned with peer acceptance and the impression communicated to others (Livingstone 2008). A research conduct in the U.S. in 2018 shows that 95% of teenagers have access to a smartphone and 45% say they are nearly always on the internet. (Schaeffer 2019). That same year, Youtube, Instagram and Snapchat were the most popular platforms among teenagers (Auxier 2020). While many studies focus on social networks among adults (Dessart et al. 2015; Hudson and Thal 2013), very little is known on the use of social networks by teenagers of the Generation Z. This research studies self-presentation and brand identification among teenagers aged 14-17 of the Gen Z on Instagram. It tries to answer the following questions: What motivates teenagers to publish content on Instagram? How is the teenagers’ self-concept reflected in their profile? What roles do brands play on the teenagers’ identity development on Instagram?

Theoretical background
This research places itself at the heart of themes relative to self-presentation, identity and relationships with brands. Self-presentation is a way to socially communicate facets of one’s self-concept and involves handling a variety of signs (Wiley 1994). In a context of online self-presentation, social comparison pressures can bring people to control their own image (Taber and Whittaker 2020). Teenagers are especially sensitive to their public image and would apparently be subject to modifying the presentation of their identity on social networks (Boyd 2007). Moreover, it is recognized that the products consumed serve to communicate part of one’s identity (Belk 1988). As such, the social actions implemented for self-presentation are often linked to consumption, involving a selection and presentation of consumption products, brands or experiences to define one’s self-concept and communicate the desired impression. Possessions can reflect a personal identity or affiliation (McCracken 1988; Schultz et al. 1989). Brands are well positioned in this process given that they offer symbolic identification possibilities. It is recognized that
teenagers use brands as social symbols (Chaplin and John, 2005).

Methodology
In-depth interviews of 30 minutes were conducted with 30 teenagers aged 14-17 who needed to have an Instagram account and have shared content over the last year to be eligible.

Results
The Instagram profile of teenagers: two types of publications
Teenagers use Instagram to socialize and stay connected with their friends as well as people they used to know. When it comes to posting, the analysis shows that two types of publications are preferred by teenagers and linked to different motivations; there are images published to capture good times and other published because of their aesthetic. All participants revealed this distinction. The first situation—capture good times—occurs when a teenager experiences a positive experience, followed by picture taking to mark the moment, and publication of a selected picture. This situation is characterized by a high level of positive emotions and the need for teenagers to capture and share an experience. The second situation—publish an aesthetically appealing picture—often occurs as part of an organized photo session among friends. The location, frequently outdoors, is selected, then the activity is carried out and the pictures are taken in order to publish one (if satisfactory). This picture will be linked to fewer emotions and memories for the teenager than the first picture, but will be visually pleasing.

Instagram duality: self-concept and impressions management
The interview analysis reveals that the participants’ Instagram profile allows them to reflect their current self-concept. Indeed, self-profile consistency is observed given that teenagers publish many images linked to their friends, interests, good times and past experiences. As mentioned by several participants, the pictures published allow them to “update” their lives and thus share their journey. Moreover, when teenagers were asked to describe their profile, many talked about it in a similar way as they would describe themselves, illustrating a form of self-consistency through Instagram. Further, when asked to
summarize their profile in one word, words pertaining to the degree of aestheticism of their profile were prevalent amongst answers (e.g., colorful, simple). In all cases, teenagers were aware of the need to make an overall good impression through their profile, consistent with this generation’s use of Instagram to get an idea of others.

**The quest for beauty on Instagram**

The interviews revealed that teenagers publish moments and memories they consider beautiful to capture the moment and emotions. Many teenagers summarize their profile with words linked to the beauty and consistency of the pictures. There is thus a quest for beauty in the use of Instagram by teenagers since what is “beautiful” becomes both a motivation and criterion. Beauty can stem from the layout of colors among the pictures of a profile, the beauty of one’s self on a picture, beautiful clothes, the quality of the pictures, or photographing something beautiful such as a landscape or sunset.

**Instagram and the relationships with brands**

In terms of brands, the results show that few brands are voluntarily identified by teenagers on pictures. Indeed, although the profiles of teenagers present certain brands (e.g., Nike sweater), this form of identification to the brand is not always conscious on the teenager’s part. When teenagers want to post a brand—for example, for clothes—their motivations are to show off their style, their new clothes, their favorite, popular or exclusive brands or to identify the brand to have more visibility or hope for the brand to share their post. So, although the profiles of teenagers illustrate their self-concept, this projection is not necessarily made through the use of brands; however, and considering the fact that the notion of brand is not limited to a product or service (Hankinson 2001), affiliation to an experiential brand was more frequently observed in the stories. For example, the participants post themselves participating in a festival or visiting a tourist site to present themselves through a desired form of consistency.

**Discussion**

This research helps to better understand the use of Instagram by teenagers and to explore their identity constructs through this social network. The results show the search for a
consistent self-profile through pictures and experiences lived, but less through brand symbolism. The research reveals the role of aesthetics for teenagers and the building of memories, enriching current literature (Sheldon and Bryant 2015).
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GORGEOUS LOW-KEY OR HIGH-TONED LUXURY: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL IDENTITY THREAT, SYMBOLISM, AND NARCISSISM ON THE CHOICE BETWEEN HIGH-AND LOW-KEY VERSIONS OF A LUXURY PRODUCT

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Keywords: Social identity threat, brand symbolism, narcissism, low-key, high-key

Description: The current study investigates the effects of the endogenous and exogenous factors on consumers’ preference between high-key and low-key versions of a luxury product in a social comparison context in which a social identity threat may exist.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

The current research aims to extend the literature on luxury product consumption by considering brand symbolism and consumer narcissism in a social environment. In study 1, we examine whether consumers will choose a low-key rather than a high-key version of a luxury product from the same brand as a result of their perceived social identity threat. In study 2, we anticipate that the degree of social identity importance moderates the impact of social identity threats on consumers’ choices. Consumers will be more motivated to dissociate with the high-threat group when they believe that their choices are essential to protect self-identity and self-esteem. In study 3, we manipulate the brand symbolism to cope with social identity threat since brands associated with strong symbolics function as a resource for consumers to construct self-identity. In study 4,
we investigate the degree of narcissism on consumers' likelihood of choice on a luxury product depending on the social identity.

**Method and Data**

Most of the students volunteered to participate in this research, with a small number of them received extra credits. Two separate experiments were conducted for each study. One has the likelihood of choosing a high-key version of a Gucci t-shirt as the dependent variable, and the other has the likelihood of choosing a low-key version as the dependent variable. Participants were grouped into high-key or low-key condition based on their attitudes towards the two types of luxury products according to the valence of emotionality. The high-key experiment consists of sixty-one participants (33 male and 28 female), and the low-key experiment consists of forty-three participants (21 male and 22 female). ANOVA analyses were conducted to reveal the main effect of social identity threat on the likelihood of choice and the interactions between social identity threat and moderators (the perceived importance of social identity, perceived symbolic meaning of brands, and the three-way interactions between social identity threat, narcissism, brand symbolism).

**Summary of Findings**

Our findings suggest that people will choose the version of a luxury product which associates with low social identity threat in both experiments. Contrary to our prediction, the perceived importance of social identity does not moderate the impact of social identity threat on the likelihood of choice under high-key ($F(2, 61)= 1.13, n.s.$) and low-key experiment ($F(2, 43)= 4.029, n.s.$). The two-way interaction of social identity threat and brand symbolism was partially confirmed. For the version associated with no social identity threat, participants reported a lower likelihood of choice when perceived brand symbols is high($M = 2.93, t (61)=1.751, p <.00$) than
it is low (M = 3.90, t = 1.872, p > .00). For the version associated with social identity threat, participants also reported a higher likelihood of choice when perceived brand symbolism is high (M = 7.48, t (61)=1.751, p < .00) than it is low (M = 6.27, t = 1.872, p > .00). A significant two-way interaction of social identity threat and narcissism was confirmed (F(1, 61)= 7.14, p < .05) in both experiments. Finally, ANOVA results showed a significant three-way interaction of social identity threat, brand symbolism, and narcissism (F(2, 43)= 8.912, p < .01).

**Key Contributions**

First, we prove the importance of consumers’ social selves in their decision-making process. Social identity threat significantly impacts their choices between product versions associated and not associated with identity threat. Second, we demonstrate that the perceived importance of consumers’ social identity did not significantly impact their choices. Consumers are risk-averse, and they tend to minimize the damages to their self-concepts by avoiding any products that potentially threaten their self-identities. Third, we found a diverging effect of brand symbolism on consumer choices. When social identity threat does not exist, consumers favor the product versions with strong perceived brand symbolism. However, the within-subjects experiment revealed that consumers favor product versions with strong symbolism, even if their social identities were threatened. Fourth, we explored the interactions among social identity threats, brand symbolism, and narcissism. Our results found that narcissism has the highest main effect on consumers’ choices concerning the social identity threat. The effects of brand symbolism diminish when considering narcissism. We also found that narcissists did not show different perceptions of brand symbolism as narcissists may ignore the brand symbolism when making a purchase decision because they overemphasize their personal feelings and impressions in social interactions.
1. Title

How customer self-determination regulates customers’ anger and revenge behavior

2. Key Contributions to academe and practitioners

This research explores and examines an integrative model of the customer revenge process by linking two theories of self-determination theory (SDT) and appraisal theory. It offers a novel conceptual framework to explain the moderating effects of orientation of motivation (OM) on the relationship between revenge predictors and revenge behavior. We conducted a survey of 901 participants to examine autonomous versus controlled orientations for revenge motivation, controlling for the level of desire for revenge to explain when customers choose to engage in direct versus indirect revenge behavior. The results show that when recovery fails, a customer’s OM regulates their manifestation of revenge. Specifically, the interaction of OM components (i.e., autonomy, relatedness, and competence) plays a significant role in the relationship between revenge predictors and revenge behavior (indirect vs. direct).

Keywords: Self-Determination Theory, Orientation of Motivation, Autonomy, Relatedness, Competence, Negative Motive, Anger, Desire for Revenge, Direct Revenge Behavior, Indirect Revenge Behavior, Autonomous Motivation, Controlled Motivation.
3. Extended Abstract

Customer revenge, defined as any action a customer takes that aims to punish a firm to “get even” for the damage it has caused, is receiving increasing attention in the marketing world (Grégoire et al., 2018; Grégoire et al., 2009). When customers perceive that firms treated them unfairly, they may desire revenge (Grégoire et al., 2009)—having a desire means to be motivated and energized to do something (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In the context of service marketing, desire for revenge refers to the extent to which an individual wishes to punish and cause harm to a firm for the damage it has caused (Aquino et al., 2001; Grégoire and Fisher, 2008). The desire can lead to direct or indirect revenge behaviors to make a faulty firm pay for their wrongdoing actions (Grégoire et al., 2010). Direct revenge behaviors (e.g., insulting and getting in a fight with service employees, hitting an object or slamming a door, or even suing the company?) refer to customers’ actions that directly target a firm’s employees and operations, and the firm is aware of these actions (Grégoire et al., 2010). Indirect revenge behaviors (e.g., negative word-of-mouth, online public complaining for negative publicity) are customers’ vengeful actions that happen ‘behind a firm’s back’, and they are difficult to control (Grégoire et al., 2010).

An overview of customer revenge studies highlights a serious limitation in understanding individuals’ motivation for direct versus indirect revenge behavior. More specifically, previous research on customer revenge considers desire for revenge as a unitary concept (e.g., Grégoire et al., 2010, 2009; McCullough et al., 2010; Zourrig et al., 2009) with the “levels” of revenge motivation, which refers to the quantity or amount of motivation. There are reasons to question this unitary approach. While both direct and indirect acts of revenge are motivated by the desire to “get even”, researchers have yet to uncover how a customer’s
level of desire for revenge motivates them to pursue either direct or indirect behavior. Using the tenets of Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci and Ryan, 2000) and appraisal theory (Lazarus, 1991), this study aims to examine the roles of “level” and “orientation” of revenge motivation to explain how aggrieved customers may engage in various forms of direct or indirect revenge behavior in response to a double deviation situation (i.e., a service failure followed by poor recovery.) In other words, the main research question is whether and how Orientation of Motivation (OM) can play a significant role in regulating customers’ revenge process when taking action in a double deviation situation.

Previous research on the revenge process mostly relies on appraisal theories, which suggest that individuals initially form judgments about a transgression (e.g., Barclay and Skarlicki, 2009; Lazarus, 1991). These judgments create negative emotions that lead to the development of antisocial motivations, which can lead to revenge behavior: inferred negative motive → anger → desire for revenge → revenge behavior.

Self-determination theory is a meta-theory for studying human motivation and personality, consisting of two sub-theories: Cognitive Evaluation Theory and Organismic Integration Theory (Deci and Ryan 1985; 2000). Cognitive Evaluation Theory specifies three primary psychological needs for explaining variability in motivation: a) a sense of autonomy (i.e., people need to feel in control of their behaviors and goals); b) a feeling of competence (i.e., people take action when they think that they have the skills needed to help them achieve their goals); and c) a feeling of relatedness (i.e., people need to experience a sense of belonging and attachment to other people) (Ryan, 1982; Ryan and Deci, 2000). Combining these psychological needs forms an individual’s orientation of motivation on a spectrum ranging from autonomous to controlled motivations (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Autonomous
motivations are based on having a choice and a sense of volition, whereas controlled motivations are based on a sense of pressure (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Autonomous and controlled motivations are different in terms of their associated experiences and their underlying regulatory processes. Consequently, revenge behaviors can differ in terms of the degree to which their motivations are autonomous versus controlled (Gagné & Deci, 2005). In this research, we examine the moderating effect of autonomous motivation versus controlled motivation on the revenge process.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

We performed an online survey of American adults using Amazon MTurk. After checking for all attention-check questions, 901 completed surveys remained in our sample. The sample was 51.4% female, and the average age was 44.5 (SD = 13.48). Participants watched a short video of a real double deviation situation and answered questions about how they would think, feel, and behave in the described situation. They also responded to questions about autonomy, competence, and relatedness based on the BNS measures (Deci and Ryan, 2000). We ran multiple regression analysis using Hayes procedure PROCESS (v3.5, models 6, 59, 73).

[Insert Table 1 about here]

First, our results are consistent with the previous research based on appraisal theory for the revenge process (i.e., Negative Motive→ anger → DFR → revenge behavior). In other

1 The video was 1:53 minutes long and participants could not move forward until the video ended.
2 The Basic Need Assessment Scale (BNS) measures the three psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Gagné, 2003).
3 We did not find a direct link between negative motive and revenge behavior (See also Joireman et al 2013).
words, the more negative motive inferred by the customers, the angrier they become, which consequently lead them to experience higher desire for revenge and higher probability to engage in revenge behavior. Also, as expected, anger predicts revenge behaviors both directly and indirectly through desire for revenge.

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

Second, our results reveal a significant positive moderating effect of OM on the relationship between anger and revenge behavior. The interaction is more pronounced between autonomy, relatedness and anger (autonomy x relatedness x anger) that leads individuals towards direct revenge behaviors ($b = .75$, s.e. = .15, $p = .06$; $\chi^2 (15) = 79.28$, $p \leq .0001$, McFadden's pseudo-$R$-squared = .166). In other words, customers with autonomous motivation are more inclined to engage in direct revenge behavior with the same level of anger. In contrast, customers with controlled motivation are more likely to engage in indirect revenge behavior.

[Insert Figure 3 and Figure 4 about here]

Marketing can take advantage of knowing customers’ autonomous versus controlled motivations of their revenge behaviors to predict customers’ direct versus indirect revenge behaviors and tailor appropriate strategies to handle double deviation situations.
4. Table and Figures

Table 1. Reliability Analyses, Descriptive Statistics, and Pearson Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>α</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Negative Motive</th>
<th>Anger</th>
<th>DFR</th>
<th>Direct Revenge Behaviors</th>
<th>Indirect Revenge Behaviors</th>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.45</td>
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<td>.187**</td>
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<td>.487**</td>
<td>.443**</td>
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</table>

Note. N = 714

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Reliability estimates are Cronbach’s alphas.
*p < .05. **p < .01.
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Appraisal Theory

Negative Motive → Anger → Desire for Revenge → Revenge Behavior (Direct vs Indirect)

SDT

Autonomy
Relatedness
Competence
OM

B = -0.07, bootstrap CI [-0.12, -0.04]

Figure 2. Revenge process measurement model

Negative Motive → Anger → DFR

β = .31***
β = .34****
β = .38****

DFR → REV_AC_B

β = .54****
β = 2.74****

β = 1.02, p = .91, NS

B = -0.07, bootstrap CI [-0.12, -0.04]
Figure 3. Moderation effects of autonomy and relatedness on revenge process

![Diagram showing the moderation effects of autonomy and relatedness on revenge process.](image)

Legend:
- **Significant**
- **Marginally significant**

Figure 4. The interaction effect of autonomy and relatedness on the relationship between anger and revenge behavior

![Graph showing the interaction effect of autonomy and relatedness on the relationship between anger and revenge behavior.](image)
5. References


HOW LINGUISTIC STYLE AFFECTS WORD-OF-MOUTH'S PERSUASION EFFECT OVER DIFFERENT IDENTITY SOURCE

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Keywords Linguistic style, Identity source, Persuasiveness, Incongruity, Need for cognition

Description: This research proposes an incongruity hypothesis, suggesting that an anonymous (identifiable) source can attract interest and gain influence by using a powerful (powerless) linguistic style among three experiments.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Online word-of-mouth messages can use either powerful or powerless linguistic styles and come from either anonymous or identifiable sources. Do differences in linguistic power affect the persuasiveness of such messages, and if so, how? In this research, we explore the joint effect of linguistic style and identity source on word-of-mouth persuasiveness.

Based on the information incongruity deriving from the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) and the heuristic–systematic model (HSM), we propose that linguistic style has different effects on the persuasiveness of word-of-mouth messages, moderated by identity source. That is, a powerful (powerless) linguistic style will enhance persuasiveness when the source is anonymous (identifiable). Moreover, we propose a specific mechanism—i.e., the incongruity hypothesis—underlying the joint effect of linguistic style and identity source on persuasiveness and predict the expectancy violation may mediate that joint effect from the perspective of Language Expectancy Theory (LET). Furthermore, we examine the moderating effect of need for cognition by comparing consumers high in need for cognition with those low in need for cognition, and we propose that due to the consumers’ different levels of elaborative thinking, the joint effect of linguistic style and identity source is only persuasive for those high in need for cognition.

Method and Data

Experiment 1 explored the prediction that a powerful linguistic style can, under
certain conditions, be less persuasive than a powerless linguistic style. In this experiment, we employed a 2 (linguistic style: powerful vs. powerless) × 2 (identity source: anonymous vs. identifiable) between-subjects design in which participants imagined that they come across a post describing attributes of a new mobile phone model while casually browsing Weibo and then react to it.

In order to explore the underlying mechanism of the joint effect of linguistic style and identity source on persuasiveness, specifically the expectancy violation arising from information incongruity. Experiment 2 employed the same experiment design mentioned above but use another product (a Japanese restaurant) and social media site (Dianping) to address the question of generalizability in experiment 1.

Experiment 3 further investigated the underlying mechanism of expectation violation by testing an important dispositional moderator—need for cognition. we employed need for cognition (continuous) × 2 (linguistic style: powerful vs. powerless) × 2 (identity source: anonymous vs. identifiable) mixed-subjects design in which participants imagined that they come across a post about a new headset while casually browsing Weibo and then react to it.

**Summary of Findings**

An anonymous source paired with a powerful style and an identifiable source paired with a powerless style violate expectancy, stimulate cognitive elaboration, and enhance persuasiveness. Furthermore, need for cognition moderates this joint effect. That is, the joint effect of linguistic style and identity source is only persuasive for those high in need for cognition.
Key Contributions

These findings shed new light on the persuasiveness of online word-of-mouth messages. This research fills the gap of previous research that no research has addressed the role of linguistic style in the persuasion process across different message sources and offer novel insights into the boundary conditions of the effects of linguistic style, showing that a powerful style can decrease persuasiveness when the source of the message is identifiable. Thus, to truly understand the myriad effects of linguistic style on persuasiveness, the anonymity or non-anonymity of the message source must be considered. In addition, this research shows how companies can flexibly design effective word-of-mouth campaigns.
LET’S GO(,) BANANAS! –

HOW EMOTIONALIZED HUMANIZATION INCREASES CONSUMERS’ LIKING OF IMPERFECT FOOD PRODUCE

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Keywords: food waste, imperfect produce, anthropomorphism, point-of-sale communication, emotions

Description: This paper examines the most effective emotional design for point-of-sale communication aiming at increasing consumers' liking and choice of visually imperfect produce.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Worldwide, 1.3 billion tons of food get lost and wasted every year, of which a large proportion is fresh fruit and vegetables. Most of these products are not thrown away because of an impairment of quality or safety, but because they not meet consumers' demands regarding visual appeal. These demands, which have grown over decades, no longer relate only to obvious product defects such as odd shapes, but also to very subtle characteristics - for example, ‘single’ bananas are often discarded because consumers consider them to be less valuable than bananas in bunches. This paper aims to investigate how consumers can be persuaded to choose imperfect produce through appropriate communication at the point-of-sale. Specifically, we focus on the interplay of anthropomorphism/humanization and basic as well as secondary emotions. Importantly, no
additional price discounts compared to the perfect product are used as selling point, as this may suggest an actual lower quality of imperfect produce.

**Method and Data**

Three online experiments were conducted (total N = 280 German consumers). In all studies, participants were asked to rate both perfect and imperfect produce being presented side by side in a typical supermarket shelf scenario. We manipulated the content of the sign installed above the imperfect produce shelf and measured product evaluation, purchase intention, and amount of imperfect produce taken, as well as feelings of compassion and sympathy for the imperfect produce. While study 1 tested the effect of humanization through text (as commonly employed in German supermarket practice), studies 2 and 3 used both pictorial and textual elements and focused on the effect of emotions and message content (study 2: basic emotions - happy vs. sad; study 3: secondary emotions - pride vs. shame). The results were analyzed by means of t-tests, ANOVAs and regression analyses.

**Summary of Findings**

We investigated how humanization and ‘product emotions’ displayed in of point-of-sale communication influence consumers’ liking (product evaluation, purchase intention, and actual amount taken) of visually imperfect produce. Confirming and extending findings of past research (e.g. Cooremans and Geuens 2019; Koo, Oh, and Patrick 2019; Mookerjee, Cornil, and Hoegg 2021), we show that consumers’ liking of imperfect produce increases when being humanized (vs. non-humanized). Although in study 2, we find no significant differences in the dependent variables between the happy and sad condition, we demonstrate that in some cases, the effect of humanization on product liking is mediated by compassion and/or sympathy. Consumers’ higher perception of produce’s humaneness evokes stronger emotions, commonly translating to increased liking. Supporting this, a subsequent field study shows that the ‘sad’ sign works significantly better
than the happy one to increase customers’ choice of imperfect produce. Finally, in study 3 we show that the message contents conveyed by an imperfect humanized product should focus on the product being proud of its flaw (i.e., considering it as a trademark) rather than ashamed (i.e., considering it as a blemish).

Key Contributions

Our findings are relevant to both marketing theory and practice. From a theoretical perspective, we contribute to the understanding of humanization’s effectiveness and the use of emotions in point-of-sale communication. We extend findings on product positioning through communication and humanization, investigate how their interplay operates and how it is used most effectively. Herein, we discuss both the use of basic and secondary emotions. From a managerial perspective, our findings may be used as a guideline on incorporating humanization in communication measures at the point-of-sale. Specifically, we show that the practice of placing humanizing signs above imperfect produce shelves is an effective starting point for increasing sales, and that both happiness and sadness, evoking compassion and sympathy in consumers’ minds, may be used as emotional triggers to leverage humanizations’ effectiveness. Hence, we demonstrate that there is a business case for imperfect produce when promoted adequately. Consequently, our findings are highly relevant not only to academics and food retailers, who may reduce waste and improve their brand images, but also to non-profit organizations and policy makers aiming to make consumers aware of waste issues. This may be done by fighting ‘beautiful is good’-attitudes through humanization, ultimately supporting a more sustainable development.

References are available upon request.
MAKING PURCHASE DECISIONS IN THE ABSENCE OF TOUCH: AN
EXAMINATION OF THE ROLE OF PRICE FRAMING AND SALE PRONENESS

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Keywords: Haptics, Price Framing, Sale Proneness, Purchase Behavior

Description: This research examines the role of providing product haptic information in impacting consumers’ perceptions and purchase intentions for regularly priced or discounted products.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

The present research aims to address two main research questions: Does providing haptic information about product touch and feel help or hurt the sale of products priced regularly or on sale? And, does this impact vary for different individuals with varying levels of sale proneness? Thus, a joint role of haptic information and price/price discount framing in influencing consumer online perceptions and behavior is studied. Further, since consumers vary in terms of how important price and price discounts are to them, an additional individual difference moderator, namely, sale proneness, is identified.

Method and Data

Two experimental design studies were conducted to assess the hypotheses. Study 1 was an online experiment with a 2 (price: regular price vs. discounted price) x 2 (haptic description present vs. absent) between-subjects design. Sale proneness was measured as an individual difference
variable, and the product stimulus was leather gloves. Price was manipulated as regular price ($19.95) or discounted price (regularly $49.95, on sale for $19.95). In the haptic condition, information about touch and feel of the product was also included: “The leather gloves are soft and form fitting.” The sample included 172 respondents, recruited via Mechanical Turk (56% males, mean age = 37.2). Study 2 was an online experiment with a 2 (price: low versus high price discount) x 2 (haptic description present versus absent) between-subjects design and included a different, higher priced product category (furniture) and focused on two different price discount levels: low (10%) versus high discount (60%). In both haptic and non-haptic conditions, a typical non-haptic product description was listed. In the haptic condition, additional touch and feel information was also present. The sample included 228 respondents, recruited via Qualtrics online consumer panel (48% males, mean age = 59 years).

**Summary of Findings**

Across two studies, the results indicate that haptic information, price information, and sale proneness interact to determine consumer responses. Further, the underlying theoretical mechanism is through perceived quality, perceived value, and purchase confidence. Specifically, the presence of haptic information favorably influences perception and purchase intentions of non-sale prone consumers for discounted products, which would have been perceived as low quality otherwise.

**Key Contributions**

Much of consumers’ shopping and purchasing has migrated from bricks-and-mortar environment to online shopping environment. This research provides theoretical contributions to the literature on behavioral pricing and to our understanding of online consumer shopping and purchase behaviors. Specifically, the research confirms that haptic product information influences consumers’ perception of product quality and is more diagnostic than extrinsic cues such as price...
when discounted price framing is employed. Our findings also advance extant research on sensory marketing and consumer behavior by providing insights into how haptic and price information interact to impact consumer responses differently based on the intrinsic motivation of individuals to respond to sale prices. We find that haptic description has the potential to reverse these tendencies by enhancing perceived quality and value, purchase confidence, and purchase intention of non-sale prone individuals for discounted products.

References are available upon request.
Memes in Advertising as Inauthentic Communication: The Triggering of Persuasion Knowledge in Young Consumers

Kenneth Henrie (Penn State Greater Allegheny), Christian Gilde (The University of Montana Western)

Abstract

This exploratory research studied how persuasive and engaging memes are. A survey of the applicable literature was based on the theoretical underpinnings offered by advertising, memes, and the persuasion knowledge model. The research design utilized qualitative tools consisting of in-depth interviews and document review to gather the necessary information, and investigate whether memes increase the persuasiveness of advertisements. First results of the research suggested that memes trigger persuasion knowledge among young consumers, as young consumers are trying to evaluate the tactics used by persuaders and use this knowledge to attribute motives.

Relevant Literature

With the proliferation of social media, memes have grown exponentially. Memes can be described as trivial pieces of communication that spawn from more significant events (Shifman 2014). In this context, the use of meme-like messaging in consumer culture is not new. However, the nature of modern memes could make them even more attractive to marketers, given their viral properties, social ubiquity, and ability to persist in the wild despite a potentially hostile environment (Wu and Ardley 2007).

From a consumer culture perspective, this hostile environment could be explained by the persuasion knowledge model (PK). The PK model posits that consumers utilize their own knowledge about both the agent of persuasion and their tactics used to influence others in this interaction (Frisstad and Wright 1984). Thus, consumers not only evaluate the message itself, but its appropriateness and the motives behind the persuasive communication. This is particularly true in times when consumers possess both cognitive capacity (attention) and access to the agent’s motives (Campbell and Kimani 2000).

Younger consumers’ use of PK can trigger defense mechanisms such as skepticism, mitigating the effectiveness of the persuasive communication, particularly when they find it to be inappropriate or reflective of inferior motives (Henrie and Taylor 2009). However, this theory has not been tested on the use of pop-culture oriented memes as a promotional tactic on Gen Z.

Therefore, this exploratory research set out to investigate whether these ads will be less effective due to the use of memes. Will young consumers feel compelled to use PK in an effort to cope with meme-based advertising, and if so, what impact will it have on engagement and persuasiveness?

Method

The method chosen for this exploratory research was qualitative in nature (Belk 2006) consisting of in-depth interviews. The research examined consumer responses to three external meme-based ads in terms of perceived authenticity and impact on attitudes. To acquire expertise in the topic and prepare thoughtful research questions for the in-depth interviews, the applicable literature was surveyed as well as group discussions were conducted in classroom settings about the persuasive nature and efficacy of memes (Gray et al. 2007). General themes emerged from the interviews which were divided into several categories. The interviewees had insights into the nature of memes, the pop-culture surrounding these media, and the consumer culture.

The researchers interviewed Gen Z students at a regional campus of a state university. Three different memes were used and recognized by the respondents featuring messages, such as a humorous liquor ad discouraging prom-drinking and a media-company ad with a small child fist pumping.

Preliminary Results

- Almost all respondents perceived the ads used as effective for eliciting recognition and engagement. The emotional responses were generally positive, as respondents perceived the promotions to be humorous. More often than not, the ads were found to be engaging.
- It became also evident that, even though this engagement was effective, the students used persuasion knowledge in their evaluations. The students employed persuasion knowledge because they thought about the ads and, frequently, questioned the motive why a particular advertiser employed a particular meme.
- In terms of persuasive effectiveness, the results were less explicit. Most respondents disclosed that the engagement and subsequent emotional response to the humorous ad did, often, not result in enhanced persuasion. This might be largely explained because persuasion knowledge is not always triggering a negative consumer response (Henrie and Miller 2011).
- In situations where consumers found the agent’s communicative efforts to be appropriate (e.g. helpful, honest), persuasion knowledge worked in favor of the agent.
- Where respondents believed the meme was relevant, it enhanced the engagement of the ad, and often the persuasiveness of the ad.
- When a disconnect between the name and the message was perceived, it was seen as inauthentic and rejected. Respondents referred to these memes as “cringey”, “inauthentic” or “cheesy”.

Conclusions

First results of the research suggested that memes trigger persuasion knowledge among young consumers, as young consumers are trying to evaluate the tactics used by persuaders and use this knowledge to attribute motives.

While most memes seemed to appeal to younger generations, some came across as inauthentic, out of touch, or dishonest attempts to reach young consumers. This provides support for the fact that the use of these memes triggers persuasion knowledge among the younger generations, as young consumers are trying to evaluate the tactics employed by persuaders and use this knowledge to attribute motives.

The authors are encouraged by the potential impact of memes on persuasive communication, both in terms of engagement and efficacy among younger consumers. The second step of this study will be quantitative in nature in order to further examine these impacts.

References

MOBILE PUSH NOTIFICATION EFFECTIVENESS: THE ROLE OF THE 
CONSUMER-FIRM RELATIONSHIP AND BROWSING BEHAVIOR

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Keywords: E-Commerce; Online Consumer Behavior; Mobile Advertising; Push notification

Description: Our research investigates the effectiveness of push notifications as retargeting tool based on different consumer heterogeneity factors, namely the consumer-firm relationship and previous browsing behavior.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question – Due to the recency of the research field of mobile marketing, research has to catch-up on understanding consumer behavior in the mobile space (e.g. Andrews et al. 2016; Tong, Luo, and Xu 2020). Up until now, research has focused on mobile coupons (e.g. Danaher et al. 2015) and mobile display ads (e.g. Bart, Stephen, and Sarvary 2014), leaving the research area of push notifications largely unexplored. Push notifications are automated messages, which are sent by a mobile application to a consumer when the application is closed. Therefore, they depict a way to directly communicate with consumers and remind them to use the app (Airship 2020). This makes push notifications a predestined retargeting tool. However, current literature solely investigates desktop banner advertisements for retargeting purposes. Moreover, mobile and retargeting literature scarcely consider the influence of consumer heterogeneity on the effectiveness of advertisements. We aim to close these research gaps by answering the following research questions: (1) How does the consumer-firm relationship and previous browsing behavior
relate to the effectiveness of retargeted push notifications? (2) Is the effectiveness influenced by different timings of push notifications?

Method and Data – We cooperated with a global travel platform to receive a large-scale dataset for a retargeting campaign via push notifications. The dataset comprises 181,041 observations collected from June 2019 to November 2020. The campaign contained three push notifications at fixed time intervals after search abandonment and excluded consumers from the campaign once they converted. We conducted two analyses with different dependent variables: The first analysis considered the click-through on one of the push notifications (yes vs. no) (Bleier and Eisenbeiss 2015). The second analysis considered five distinct conversion outcomes, namely whether the consumer converted after the first, second, third, or unrelated to a push notification or not at all (Gopalakrishnan and Park 2020). For the independent variable consumer-firm relationship we evaluated the consumer’s previous transactions with the firm (de Cannière, de Pelsmacker, and Geuens 2010). For previous browsing behavior we investigated the number of searches in the week prior to enrollment in the retargeting campaign (Sismeiro and Bucklin 2004). We conducted a logistic regression for our first analysis to account for the binary dependent variable and a multinomial regression for our second analysis to account for the discrete dependent variable with more than two categorial outcomes (Agresti 2003).

Summary of Findings – We found that a strong consumer firm-relationship is negatively associated with clicking on push notifications while previous browsing behavior is positively related to clicking on push notifications. This confirms that consumers with a strong relationship are accustomed to the messages and less influenceable by them (Moe and Fader 2004) while consumer with increased browsing behavior are highly involved in the purchase decision and motivated to process every additional information (Hoyer, MacInnis, and Pieters 2016).
Nonetheless, while we hypothesized that consumers with a strong relationship are most likely to convert unrelated to a push notification, we found that they are even slightly more likely to convert after the third push notification. This implies that retargeting messages could act as a useful purchase reminder when sent with some time elapsed after search abandonment for established customers. For browsing behavior, we found that in general consumers with higher levels of browsing are most likely to convert after a dynamically retargeted push notification. Also, our findings indicate that conversion likelihood decreases significantly from the first, to the second, to the third push notification, and thus with time elapsed since search abandonment.

**Key Contributions** – We are among the first to assess push notifications as mobile advertising and retargeting tool, thereby contributing in the following ways: First, our study is one of the first to consider consumer heterogeneity factors to assess the effectiveness of retargeted advertising messages (Grewal et al. 2016). We show that consumers with a weaker firm-relationship and consumers with augmented browsing behavior are most receptive to push notifications and likely to show a behavioral response. Second, we deepen the understanding regarding timing and frequency of push notifications for different consumer types (e.g. Sahni, Narayanan, and Kalyanam 2019). We demonstrate that for consumers with a strong relationship, a lower amount of push notifications is effective with larger time gaps after search abandonment while consumers with augmented browsing behavior should be targeted directly after search abandonment. Finally, we prove that traditional marketing theories apply to digital marketing contexts building on a large-scale secondary dataset. Thereby we not only contribute to the ongoing discussion on the validity of these traditional theories in a contemporary context but test them with actual transaction data whereas traditional studies mainly rely on laboratory data (e.g. Petty, Cacioppo, and Schumann 1983).
References are available upon request
Old is not always Gold: The role of Temporal Congruence in shaping the downstream effects of Firm's Longevity

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Marketers often employ a firm’s year of establishment to communicate the business's longevity (Desai, Kalra, and Murthi 2008). Prior literature suggests that older firms are evaluated more favorably due to their perceived credibility and quality (Zhang, Kashmiri, and Cinelli 2019), with a firm's longevity acting as an extrinsic cue.

Nonetheless, contrary to the dominant belief that longevity is always beneficial, in this research, we contend that this may not necessarily be so, especially when the benefit offered is incongruent with firm’s longevity. For example, we argue that when an older automobile firm offers self-control (e.g., eco-friendly) vis-à-vis indulgence (e.g., luxury) oriented benefits, it may negatively impact purchase evaluation. Likewise, when an older culinary firm offers self-control (e.g., healthy) vis-à-vis indulgence (e.g., tasty) oriented benefits, it is more likely to impact purchase evaluation negatively. Therefore, in this research, we aim to examine how and why consumers associate a firm's longevity with benefits-oriented to indulgence ("taste" and "luxury") vs. self-control ("health" and "eco-friendly") and its downstream effects.

The association of indulgence (vs. self-control) oriented benefits to old (vs. young) firms and its downstream effects can be explained from three perspectives: the consumer, the regulators, and the firm. We suggest that product categories evolve such that the benefits move from the core and basic product needs to indulgent needs and subsequently to self-control needs that are focused on the long-term well-being of the self and the society.

A theoretical backing for this comes from the hierarchy of needs (Maslow 1970), which explains how consumers tend to move from safety needs to rich resources (Kivetz and Simonson 2002) and next toward the self-actualization needs, which are more about self-control (Paschen, Wilson, and Robson 2020). Another theoretical argument for this comes from the product life cycle theory that explains how product benefits evolve over the life cycle of the product category (Vernon 1992).

In a pilot study ($N = 31$), we found that consumer expectations from products shift from the basic needs when the products are introduced to indulgent needs and later to self-control-oriented needs for four existing product categories and two futuristic product categories.

Literature suggests that indulgence-oriented benefit from food is "tasty," a more primitive and tangible consumer expectation. Tasty food is energy-dense containing a higher content of sugar, salt, and various other fatty elements (Breslin 2014; Papies and Veling 2013). As humans evolved, their lifestyles changed. With the shift toward a more sedentary lifestyle and an increase in associated ailments (Larsen 2003), consumers' consciousness of healthy eating habits has also increased. Similarly, the automobile industry's evolution indicates that consumers initially demanded indulgence-oriented benefits (comfort/luxury) and only much later opted for eco-friendliness (Damiani, Deregibus, and Andreone 2009) due to regulatory pressures. Further, the evidence from policymaking and regulation suggests that as product categories have evolved, the policymaking and regulatory intervention has happened at a later stage.

Also, older firms, as such, have in the past offered products that satiated indulgent needs, while younger firms, because of the reasons cited above, are more likely to offer self-control-oriented needs. Though older firms evolve with time, their core offering remains unchanged
Moreover, older firms have well-defined associations due to their established expertise (Olsen, Slotegraaf, and Chandukala 2014). However, because of their low longevity, younger firms are not perceived to have the expertise; hence, the effect might be weaker.

Additionally, extant literature suggests a negative correlation between taste and health and between luxury and eco-friendliness (Raghunathan, Naylor, and Hoyer 2006; Beckham and Voyer 2014). Therefore, we hypothesize;

**H1**: Consumers associate indulgence (vs. self-control) oriented benefits with old (vs. young) firms.

**H2**: When the old (vs. young) firm is positioned along indulgence (vs. self-control) oriented benefits, it is highly likely to have a positive purchase evaluation. However, this effect might be weaker for younger firms.

Due to their longevity, older firms are more likely to have knowledge, experience, and skills in offering benefits that were temporally congruent to these firms’ founding time. Prior studies suggest that expertise enhances fit (Choi and Rifon 2012) through the "match-up" effect (Till and Busler 2000). The "match-up hypothesis" (Kamins and Gupta 1994) posits that perceived expertise in offering specific benefits enhances congruence (Lee and Koo 2016) between a brand and its offered benefits, in turn influencing brand evaluation (Gong and Li 2017; Jacob, Khanna, and Rai 2020). Formally,

**H3**: The impact of a firm's longevity and association with indulgence (vs. self-control) oriented benefits on consumers' purchase likelihood is serially mediated by perceived expertise followed by congruence.

**H4**: The indulgence (vs. self-control) oriented benefits moderate the mediating effect of perceived expertise and congruence on the relationship between the firm's longevity and purchase likelihood.

We conducted five studies to validate our findings, all of which were supported. Studies 1A and 1B tests H1 using a single-factor (firm's longevity: old/young) between-subjects design for two different product categories. Study 1A established the association with a single attribute for “tasty” and “healthy,” whereas study 1B did it with multiple attributes (pre-tested) for “luxury” and “eco-friendly.” Unlike studies 1A and 1B, in study 1C, the perceived benefit was the independent variable, and the type of firm (old/young) was the dependent variable. We tested H1 in study 1C using a 2 (firm's longevity: old/young, between-subjects) X 2 (benefits: indulgence – luxury/self-control - eco-friendly oriented benefits, within-subjects) mixed design. Study 2 tests H2 using a 2 (firm's longevity: old/young) X 2 (benefits: indulgence – luxury/self-control - eco-friendly oriented benefits) between-subjects design. Finally, study 3 tests H3 and H4 using 2 (firm's longevity: old/young) X 2 (benefits: indulgence – tasty/self-control - health-oriented benefits) between-subjects design and showed a significant moderated serial mediation.

This is possibly the first work to demonstrate that the positive impact of longevity is contingent on the fit with its perceived benefits. It adds to the benefits evolution literature by
elucidating the change in benefits offered by firms from basic to indulgence and self-control-oriented benefits. For practitioners, this research emphasizes the need to judiciously exploit a firm's longevity in alignment with the benefits offered.

[996 Words]

References


PSYCHOLOGICALLY ACCESSING OWNERSHIP: HOW DOES
PSYCHOLOGICAL OWNERSHIP AFFECT PEER-TO-PEER ACCESS-BASED
CONSUMPTION?

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Keywords: Individual Psychological Ownership, Access-Based Consumption, Peer-to-Peer, Sharing.

Description: An experimental study that investigated the effects of the cognitive state of ownership (IPO) on a transaction that is mediated by the market but in which no transfer of ownership occurs (P2P-ABC).

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

The feeling of ownership one has over an object, in legal terms or not, generates a cognitive state known as individual psychological ownership (IPO) (Pierce, Kostova, and Dirks 2003). The current research directs its efforts to investigate the effects of IPO in peer-to-peer access-based consumption (P2P-ABC; e.g., Airbnb), that is, over a type of consumer-to-consumer consumption that may be mediated by the market, but where no transference of ownership takes place (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012). Inspired by notable works applied to ownership-based consumption (OBC) (Felix and Almaguer 2019; Kirk 2019), the present research proposes that the more individuals can exercise IPO mechanisms (control, e.g., touching an object; self-investment, e.g., designing an object; and intimate knowledge, e.g., analyzing an object) over third-party’s items, the more they tend to access (share) it. Precisely, this is expected to occur because of increased chances to exert these IPO mechanisms decrease individuals’
psychological discrepancies regarding awaited and obtained benefits from the target, even though these benefits are consumed transiently (Gurven 2006). Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following research question: As is ascertained in traditional transactions where ownerships are transferred, does IPO affect transactions based on access (P2P-ABC)?

**Method and Data**

In an attempt to investigate the effect of IPO on P2P-ABC, answering the research question robustly, this study also incorporates the mediation role of consumers’ utilitarian perception (UP) (Quiggin 1982; Thaler 1980) and the moderating role of basic individual values (BIV) (as proposed by the Values Theory Refined – Schwartz et al. 2012). In this regard, the current research employs four experiments to achieve its goals: test (i) the main effect of IPO on P2P-ABC (Experiments 1a and 1b), (ii) the presence of an indirect effect of IPO on P2P-ABC via individuals’ UP (Experiment 2), and, finally, (iii), the conditional indirect effect in previous causal mediation regulated by the presence of value focus expressed by each person (BIV). The current work adopts the utmost diverse experimental drawings, represented by the use of all IPO mechanisms (control, self-investment, and intimate knowledge), widely used targets in real platforms (e.g., money, accommodation, everyday items – books and kitchenware), several alternative accounts (e.g., convenience, satisfaction), two participants’ responses facets (attitude and behavior), and two mediation checks (measurement-of-mediation vs. manipulation-of mediator).

**Summary of Findings**

Study 1a supported the hypothesis (H1) that the greater someone’s IPO over a potentially accessed third-party target (book), the greater his chances of use (P2P-ABC) \[\text{Median}_{L.IPO} = 5 \text{ vs. Median}_{H.IPO} = 6; \text{MRank}_{L.IPO} = 1.579 \text{ vs. MRank}_{H.IPO} = 2.162, U = 633, z = 2.531, p < .05, \delta = .564\].
Study 1b reinforced Study 1a (H1) through different design (e.g., P2P lending as the target) [attitudinal: Mdn_{L,IPO} = 5 vs. Mdn_{H,IPO} = 5.67; Mrank_{L,IPO} = 748 vs. Mrank_{H,IPO} = 1.143; U = 252, z = -3.092, p < .05, δ = .856; behavioral: χ^2(1, N = 61) = 3.92, p < .05].

Study 2 confirmed the hypothesis (H2) that individuals’ UP mediates the effect of IPO on P2P-ABC (target: accommodation) [before: Mdn_{Ut} = 6 vs. Mdn_{Pl} = 5.83 ; Mrank_{Ut} = 1.338 vs. Mrank_{Pl} = 1.363, U = 622, z = .479, p > .05, δ = .111; after: M_{Ut} = 3.34, SD_{Ut} = 1.56 vs. M_{Pl} = 4.13, SD_{Pl} = 1.49; t (71) = -2.21, p < .05, δ = .518].

Study 3 confirmed the hypothesis (H3) that the effect of IPO on P2P-ABC via UP is regulated by BIV (target: pressure pan) [SF-HOV individuals: (CI_{95%}) = (.04, .87); PF-HOV: (CI_{95%}) = (-.485, -.002)].

All the alternate accounts were rejected (e.g., involvement).

**Key Contributions**

Responding to Hulland, Thompson, and Smith’s (2015) and Peck and Luangrath’s (2018) calls for IPO studies towards ABC, this work observed that despite ABC is not affording ownership transference for its users, feelings of ownership over accessed targets is practicable whether individuals adequately operate at least one of the IPO mechanisms (e.g., self-investment). Also, the present study explored how pro-ownership psychological mechanisms strengthen non-ownership-based practices through a rare cognitive analysis in ABC (Chen 2009; Hwang and Griffiths 2017). Concomitantly, this work explores the ABC utilitarian facet but through experimental designs (Campbell and Stanley 2015), a technique which has been ignored in this literature (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012). Finally, this work increments BIV literature (Schwartz et al. 2012), enlarging the number of studies that observed the regulative factor of values to commercial transactions featured by temporality and anonymity. Managerially, practitioners may take advantage of this work’s findings by providing discounts.
on fees for those providers who encourage leasees to use the targets as their own assets (e.g., frequently reminding that such accessed object is ‘yours’) and certifying (e.g., asking after use) that this increased degree of control (IPO mechanism) made them carry out their initial utilitarian intention (e.g., performance).

References are available upon request.
THE EFFECT OF TYPOGRAPHY ON BRAND CREDIBILITY: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF THE MESSAGE PERSONA

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**Keywords:** Typography, message appeals, message persona, brand credibility, experimental design.

**Description:** This study adopts a between-subjects experimental design to assess the links between typography, brand credibility, message persona aiming to answer the following questions: How does the typography/typeface of a CSR message affect message persona and brand credibility? And How does perceived message fit affect the brand credibility?

**ABSTRACT**

This study focuses on the mediating role of the message persona on the relationship between typography and brand credibility within the scope of corporate social responsibility. It further investigates the direct effect of the perceived fit on brand credibility. The results confirmed the mediating role of message persona on the abovementioned relationship and the impact of perceived fit on brand credibility.

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INTRODUCTION

The typography's role is more than anticipated in marketing (Tannenbaum et al., 1964). It can be used for promotional and communicational materials to change the consumers’ feelings and actions (Bringhurst, 2004). Marketers can communicate with their audiences via typefaces that they use in their products’ packages, logos, slogans, the texts about the brand, which can be screened in digital and print media.

The semantic qualities of the typefaces can alter the effect of the message content that is intended to be created on the consumers (Bartram, 1982; McCarthy and Mothersbaugh, 2002). The perceived fit between typefaces and CSR message appeals (rational vs. emotional) is an essential factor in evaluating the brands' credibility (Bringhurst, 2004, Reber and Schwarz, 1999). In this direction, this study aims to find out the relationship between the typography of the text and its effects on brand credibility in the CSR context. The mediating role of the message persona that comes out of the semantic effects of the typefaces and the perceived fit's role on the brand credibility is also investigated.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Typography and Semantic Effects of Typefaces

Typography is defined as the field of study that explores “the form, spacing, and layout of words and sentences in the text of a written or displayed communication messages” (McCarthy and Mothersbaugh, 2002; p.664). Physical features such as style (i.e. being serif, script), size, x-height, weight, and slant of a typeface affect the form of the typeface (McCarthy and Mothersbaugh, 2002; p.667). There are several typefaces in visual communication; however, serif and script are the most commonly used ones. In the literature, Serif is described as the “small mark or foot at the end of a stroke,” and Script type is considered as “any typeface that emulates handwriting, whether connected cursive or informal print” (Coles and Spiekermann, 2012; p.241).
Typography has potential to enlighten, dignify, reveal, or purposely conceal the meaning or meaninglessness of the text (Bringhurst, 2004). Thus, typefaces are considered as the tools that have power to evoke on their own rather than a medium that transmit the meaning of written words (Childers and Jass, 2002). The source of this power is the consideration that typefaces are associated with human personality traits and it gives rise to constitute connotative meaning in people’s minds with the help of the semantic qualities that typefaces have (Tannenbaum et al., 1964; Tantillo et al., 1995; Zaichkowsky, 2010). In the literature, personality attributes associated with the typefaces were used to mark and understand these connotations. According to Brumberger, (2003), the readers associate some personality attributes with some typefaces. When readers saw the text written with a certain typeface, they can associate the text with some personality attributes. Hence, it is hypothesized that:

H1: Typography of the text has an impact on typeface persona. Serif type face and script typeface will be associated with different typeface personas.

**Typography, Message Persona and Brand Credibility**

Semantic influences of a typeface can change the text's apparent meaning to the text's concealed meaning that the reader comprehends. (Bartram, 1982; McCarthy and Mothersbaugh, 2002). According to Lewis and Walker (1989), the typefaces' semantic associations can sometimes even get ahead of the message content. Semantic features of a typeface might be used to leave a specific impression to the receiver that reveals the designer's desired emotions and change the perception of the reader toward the typeface and create a message persona (Bartram, 1982).

Brand credibility relies on “the willingness and ability of firms to deliver what they promise” (Erdem et al., 2006, p.34). When the message is clear in terms of its all associations, it will diminish the ambiguity in consumers’ minds and generate higher levels of credibility. For instance, a brand claiming to be natural in its message and use a robotic/artificial typeface may
generate confusion and harms the credibility of the brand and the product (Van Rompay and Pruyn, 2011). Hence, it is hypothesized that:

Hence, it is hypothesized that:

H2: Typography has an impact on brand credibility.

H3: The effect of typography on brand credibility is mediated by message persona.

**Message Appeal Types and Perceived Fit in the Context of Corporate Social Responsibility**

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is defined as the enduring, differentiating characteristic that describes a brand’s actions with respect to its obligation to the society at large and the individuals living in that society (Madrigal and Boush, 2008). The execution of CSR strategies as planned increases their positive influences for the brands (Kim, 2011; Zayyad et al., 2020).

The strategies that the firms use to form their CSR messages are vital for the companies that aim to communicate with their target audience with CSR messages. There are two types of message appeals defined in the literature: emotional and rational (Stafford and Day, 1995). According to Royne (2010), emotional appeals target the emotions of the consumers, while rational appeals target the cognition of the people. Thus, emotional appeals utilize the consumer’s sentiments to convince them, and rational appeals introduce elaborated information to persuade consumers. Emotional appeals can be used to form a sincere and sympathetic brand image, whereas rational appeals can be used to create more competent and realistic brand images (Andreu et al., 2015).

The fit between the message appeal and the typeface is another concern of marketers. Keller (1993) described the notion of congruity/fit as “the extent to which a brand association shares content and meaning with another brand association” (p.7). While its presence creates positive influences for the brands, the absence of fit can induce negative judgments about these brands.
Pan and Schmitt (1996) stated that the appropriateness between the associations of the typeface and the message itself gives rise to positive feelings about that brand. High levels of perceived fit (between the message appeal and typeface) may generate perceptual fluency and ease the stimulus processing (Bottomley and Doyle, 2006). When the perceptual fluency is reinforced, consumers can comprehend the message more easily (Reber et al., 2004), which in turn increases the positive attitudes and interpretations toward the source of the message (Lee and Labro, 2004; Reber et al., 2004). When it is easy to understand a text, it is facile for consumers to say that the text contains more truth (Reber and Schwarz, 1999). In circumstances where the perceived fit is high, it can be considered that the credibility of the text is higher. Hence, it is hypothesized that:

H4: Perceived fit (between typeface and the message appeal) has an impact on brand credibility.

**RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study adopts a between-subjects experimental design to assess the causal links between the variables of the study aiming to answer the following questions: How does the typeface of a CSR message affect message persona and brand credibility? And How does perceived message fit affect the brand credibility? Two typefaces (serif vs. script) and two message appeals (emotional vs. rational) are used in two studies. In a pilot study, alphabets with two different typefaces (serif vs. script) were shown to the respondents, and the personality associations of the typefaces were evaluated by using Osgood et al. (1957) scale.

In our study, self-report questionnaire items consisting of multi-item scales from prior research are used. These items were measured using a seven-point Likert scale anchored by “strongly disagree” and “strongly agree”. Brand credibility was measured via Erdem and Swait (2004), message persona was measured Osgood et al. (1957), and perceived message fit was measure by Geue and Plewa (2010). The questionnaire also included the manipulation checks for message appeal, perceived fit, and demographic variables, such as age and gender.
SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

Data were collected from 228 university students for course credit. The respondents consisted of 57.9% females and 42.1% males with ages ranging from 26 to 35 years old.

All the multi-item scales used to measure the constructs mentioned had high reliabilities (message persona competent $\alpha_{\text{comp}}=.876$; message persona sensitive $\alpha_{\text{sen}}=.806$; brand credibility $\alpha_{\text{bc}}=.933$; perceived fit $\alpha_{\text{fit}}=.933$ (Nunnally, 1978).

<table>
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<tr>
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Table 1 Typefaces used in Study

In the pilot study, for the alphabet texts, the participants' associated Serif typeface more with the competency ($M_{\text{serif}}=5.07$ vs. $M_{\text{script}}=3.74$; $p<0.01$) and Script typeface more with sensitivity ($M_{\text{serif}}=4.023$ vs. $M_{\text{script}}=5.408$; $p<0.01$). Considering the results, Serif typefaces have higher competent perception while script typefaces have higher sensitive perception (H1 supported).

Independent samples t-test used to check for message appeal manipulations since the homogeneity of group variances were satisfied. There was a statistically significant difference between emotional and rational message appeals ($M_{\text{emotional}} = 1.64$ vs. $M_{\text{rational}} = 1.35$; $F = .152$, $p < 0.01$).

Following manipulation check, analyses are conducted to test the hypothesized model according to Hayes (2017), model 4: 10,000 bootstrapped samples. Analyses confirmed the impact of typeface on message persona ($b = -0.4577$, standard error = 0.1510, $t = -3.03$, $p < 0.05$); the mediating role of message persona for the relationship between typeface and brand.
credibility (b = 0.5040, standard error = 0.550, t = 9.17, p < 0.01, [CI] 0.3957 to 0.6123); the impact of perceived fit on brand credibility (b = 0.4982, standard error = 0.1267, t = 3.06, p < 0.01, [CI] 0.2486 to 0.7478).

The study results indicated that the typefaces used in CSR messages affect the message persona, whether the message appeal is rational or emotional. Messages written with Serif typeface are perceived as more competent, and messages written with Script typeface are perceived as more sensitive irrespective of their appeal. Also, the perceived fit (high vs. low) between the typeface and message appeal has an effect on brand credibility. Consumers perceived a high fit for the messages that were written with Serif and had rational appeal (or written with Script and had emotional appeal) and low fit for the messages that were written with Serif and had emotional appeal (or written with Script and had rational appeal). The analysis also indicated that increased levels of fit positively affect brand credibility.

**DISCUSSION**

The main objective of this study is to find out the effect of typography on CSR message personas and brand credibility. In line with the previous research, the findings support that the typefaces from different typeface style categories (i.e., serif and script) differ from each other when it comes to personality associations that they evoked (Amare and Manning, 2012; Benson, 1985; Childers and Jass, 2002; Juni and Gross, 2008; Pan and Schmitt, 1996). Regardless of whether the text shown to participants is an alphabet text or a CSR message, serif typeface (i.e., Aachen BT) generated higher competency perception for the participants while script typeface (i.e., Atlantica Signature) elicited higher sensitivity perception. Also, the results of this study confirmed the mediating effect of the message persona and the effect of perceived fit on brand credibility.
This study integrates the previous studies and focuses on the semantic effects of the typefaces and the perceived fit and their effects on brand credibility. This study suggests that if the brands or companies wish to be perceived as “competent,” they should use the serif typefaces in their CSR communications. On the contrary, if they wish to be perceived as “sensitive”, they should use script typefaces. The perceived fit between the typeface and the message appeal gives rise to positive attitudes about the brand or the company. The findings of this study also suggest marketing managers to select typefaces that are congruent with their CSR messages to increase the sense of brand credibility.

**KEY CONTRIBUTIONS**

In the literature, many researchers focus on examining the legibility of the typefaces (Tracy, 1986; Gluth, 1999; Lonsdale, 2014), the semantic qualities of the typefaces (Tannenbaum et al., 1964; Tantillo et al., 1995; Brumberger, 2003; Zaichkowsky, 2010), and the effect of the typography in the area of “persuasiveness” (McCarthy and Mothersbaugh, 2002), “brand perception and consumer memory” (Childers and Jass, 2002), “brand identity” (Zaichkowsky, 2010). However, there is limited research investigating the effect of typography on the reader’s sense of brand credibility in the context of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

This research focuses on the relationship between typography and brand credibility, the mediating role of the message persona, and perceived fit in the CSR context. This study's significance is not only integrating the typography and message fit but also examining the relationship between the typography and brand credibility in the CSR environment.

Additionally, this study helps firms and marketers to create more credible messages by applying a matching typographic character with their message content and appeal. Since typefaces have semantic connotations in addition to the actual meaning of the words, typography is an effective tool for shaping and changing the evaluations towards the brand or the company.
LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

For future research, this research might be enlarged by including participants from different countries. Additionally, in this research, two typefaces were investigated (i.e., Aachen BT as serif typeface, Atlantica Signature as script typeface). The outcomes might change if this model is applied with other typefaces. Therefore, for future research, more typefaces might be used in the study. Besides the style of the typefaces (being serif or script), other typographic qualities (the size of the typefaces, line length, and leading) might be examined for future researches.

REFERENCES


THE INFLUENCE OF PERCEIVED MOVEMENT ON CONSUMER RESPONSES TO BRAND RECOVERY EFFORTS

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Keywords: brand failure, recovery strategies, movement, digital media

Description: Brand failure recovery strategies in digital media including low (versus high) perceived movement visual messaging cues lead to more favorable consumer outcomes due to higher perceived stability of the firm.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Brand failures ranging from minor issues to major breakdowns cost U.S. firms more than $75 billion in 2017 (Hyken 2018). Given the prevalence of brand failures and their impact on consumer outcomes, firms are increasingly utilizing digital media as a recovery tool after a brand failure (Hogreve et al. 2019). However, research has been limited on visual cues that firms incorporate into messages after a failure has occurred. Consumers perceive movement by facilitating mental imagery of the action depicted in a static object or image (Cian et al. 2015).
We argue that the perceived movement in an image may also impact persuasion by influencing how that information is processed. Dual process models suggest two routes through which attitudes may be formed or changed. Systematic processing involves analytic processing of messages, while heuristic processing involves the use of cues to appraise the message (Petty and Cacioppo 1986). Because static images lead to more automatic processing, we propose that less processing resources will be devoted to the brand failure. Furthermore, given that low perceived movement signals capability, reliability, and trustworthiness (Koppensteiner et al. 2016), in a brand failure, messages with static visual cues will be evaluated more favorably compared to dynamic cues.

**Method and Data**

We tested our hypothesis in four studies. In Study 1, we tested the effect by using a 2 (context: control or failure) x 2 (perceived movement level: low or high) between-subjects design. In the control condition, consistent with prior literature, response with high perceived movement was more beneficial. However, as predicted, when a service failure occurred, participants were more favorable toward the target firm when the firm response included a low perceived movement visual messaging cue. In Study 2, we demonstrated the role of perception of firm stability as the underlying mechanism. In Study 3, we examine the moderating effect of provider fault in a 2 (perceived movement level: low or high) x 2 (provider fault: high or low) between-subjects design. In the low-fault condition, participants rated the firm’s service higher when the response included a low movement cue than a high movement cue. However, when provider fault was high, participants rated the firm’s service higher when the response included a high movement cue.
cue compared to a low movement cue. Finally, in Study 4, we conducted a real choice study to provide external validity to the effect.

Summary of Findings

Through three experiments and one real behavior study, we show that, after brand failures, low perceived movement in visual messaging cues leads to more favorable consumer outcomes relative to more dynamic cues due to perceived stability of the firm. This effect is moderated by provider fault (low-fault vs. high-fault). In the low-fault condition, we replicate our findings. However, when provider fault was high, we observed an opposite effect. Study 4 uses a real behavior setting to replicate and add external validity to our findings.

Key Contributions

The current work makes key contributions to both marketing theory and practice. From a theory perspective, although prior work suggests that greater perceived movement is a positive cue in marketing communications, the current research identifies a context in which low perceived movement cues generate more favorable consumer outcomes. Understanding the role of perception of movement also adds to the limited literature on textual or pictorial visual cues in response to brand failure, demonstrating how perceived movement can be used to diffuse the consequences of brand failures. In addition, the findings presented here reveal a new method for responding to brand failures by demonstrating that the use of visual messaging cues results in greater benefit to firms than requesting personal messaging from consumers, a commonly used
method of recovery. However, when firms are deemed to be at fault for brand failures, firms may benefit from the use of high (rather than low) perceived movement in visual messaging cues.

References are available upon request.
THE POWER OF AWW: A DUAL-PROCESS APPROACH TO CUTENESS-AFFECTED RISK TAKING AND DECISION-MAKING

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Keywords Cuteness, advertising, affect and emotion, evolutionary psychology, risk decision making

Description The current research aims to consolidate seemingly contradictory findings in the emerging research on cuteness and examines the effects of exposure to cuteness on risk-seeking behavior.
The growing presence of cuteness in our daily life is accompanied by emerging research on its social and behavioral impacts (Buckley 2016; Steinnes et al. 2019). However, few have investigated the effect of cuteness on consumer choices, with minimal attention devoted to risk-taking and decision-making. Although the existing literature provides no direct evidence to answer our research question, some indirect findings point to opposite predictions. On the one hand, a few studies have consistently found that exposure to cuteness makes individuals behave in more careful ways (Glocker et al. 2009; Nittono et al. 2012), suggesting that cuteness might lead to risk aversion. On the other hand, some other studies have documented an increased level of aggressiveness (Aragón et al. 2015; Stavropoulos and Alba 2018) and indulging consumer choices (Nenkov and Scott 2014; Scott and Nenkov 2016) following exposure to cuteness, suggesting a risk-seeking outcome. Thus, this research aims to systematically examine the influence of cuteness on consumers’ risk preference—does exposure to cute stimuli make people risk-averse or risk-seeking? To consolidate these seemingly contradictory findings, we propose two distinct processes (risk-seeking process vs. risk-averse process) by which exposure to cuteness shapes people’s risk preference.

Method and Data

We describe four studies conducted to investigate the effects of cuteness on risk-seeking in laboratory and simulation studies across various risk domains. We expect that exposure to cute stimuli makes individuals take more risks by lowering their conscientiousness. Across the four experiments, participants view cute stimuli within different risk domains including health,
financial, and safety risk. Study 1 seeks initial evidence with a risky food choice that has real consequences in a laboratory experiment. Studies 2 and 3 provide convergent support for the effects of cuteness on risk-seeking behavior in a series of classical gambling games. Study 2 conceptually replicates the effect and provides evidence that cuteness leads individuals to take more risks. Next, study 3 provides evidence for low conscientiousness being the fundamental mechanism that links cuteness and risk-seeking behavior. Furthermore, study 3 examines the frequency of risk-seeking behavior by comparing the participants’ likelihood of choosing riskier options in four different conditions (i.e., whimsical babies vs. neutral babies vs. whimsical adults vs. neutral adults) in order to rule out whimsicality as an alternative explanation. Study 4 replicates risk-averse results from previous studies (Nitto et al. 2012; Sherman et al. 2013) and demonstrates risk-seeking choice when caring motivation is absent.

**Summary of Findings**

We develop a conceptual framework and demonstrate the positive impact of cuteness on risk-seeking behavior. The present study argued that when individuals are exposed to cuteness, they are more likely to take risks as a result of low conscientiousness. The results showed the effect within various risk contexts including food consumption (study 1), gambling games (Study 2 and 3), and a mass shooting (Study 4). Consistent with the predictions, four experimental studies reveal that participants exposed to cuteness are less likely to be conscientious, which in turn leads them to take more risks. However, the effect of exposure to cuteness on risk-seeking behavior attenuates when caring motivation outweighs approaching tendency. The findings also show that the effect of cuteness on risk preference is not limited to direct influences of a cute entity itself, observers’ gender, a certain dimension of cuteness, or a particular risk context (Fischer and Hills 2012; Nenkov and Scott 2014).
**Key Contributions**

First, this research sheds light on the topic of cuteness in the marketing literature (Wang et al. 2017; Zhipeng et al. 2018). Marketing literature on the subject of cuteness has been scarce despite the popularity of cuteness in marketing practice and the importance of biological and psychological changes evoked by cuteness (Glocker et al. 2009). Importantly, the current research tries to consolidate the contradictory findings on the effects of exposure to cuteness on risk preference by examining a newly proposed dual-process model moderated by consumers’ caring motivation. Second, this research will extend the literature on risk preference (Esteky et al. 2018; Shen et al. 2014). Consumer risk preference is one of the most important topics in the marketing literature because consumers deal with risks and uncertainties as a part of their everyday decision-making (Murthy and Djamaludin 2002). Even though consumers make decisions involving risks every day and are consistently surrounded by cuteness, I am unaware of any existing study investigating how subtle exposure to cuteness in the background shapes consumers’ risk preference across various risk domains (Li and Yan 2021; Poniewozik 2019). Therefore, the present study attempts to fill this theoretical gap.

References are available upon request.
THE ROLE OF EXTERNAL CUES ON CONSUMER ADOPTION OF CANNABIDIOL (CBD) PRODUCTS: A HEALTH BELIEF MODEL APPROACH

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Keywords: CBD products, cues to action, certification, brand reputation, health belief model

Description: Drawing upon the Health Belief Model (HBM), this study investigates how brand reputation, certification, and cues to action influence the perceived benefits of and barriers to CBD, which in turn influence purchase intention.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Cannabidiol (CBD)-rich products, as natural health products, have attracted the interest of customers wanting to sustain a healthy lifestyle and well-being because CBD is a psychoactive cannabinoid that does not produce impairment (Hammond and Goodman 2020). Despite customers’ growing interest in CBD, a relatively new product available to consumers, there has been little research on customer perceptions and purchase intentions. Thus, adapting the Health Belief Model (HBM), this study investigates the following questions: 1) how three types of an external cue, i.e., brand reputation, certification, and cues to action, would differently influence the perceived benefits of and barriers to CBD, which in turn influence purchase intention.
intention and 2) whether perceived threats to one’s health moderate these relationships, such that a high level of perceived threat strengthens the impacts of the perceived benefits of and barriers to CBD on purchasing intentions.

**Method and Data**

The study design was a 2 (brand reputation: low vs. high) x 2 (certification indicating FDA approval: absent vs. present) x 2 (CBD oil vs. body lotion) between-subject, scenario-based experiment. 511 usable data were obtained from a customer panel that represents the characteristics of U.S. customers. Measurement items of the variables were adapted from existing research by modifying wording for the context of the current study.

**Summary of Findings**

Using PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013), this study found both the perceived benefits of and barriers to CBD fully mediated the relationship between certification and purchase intention ($\beta_{\text{benefits}} = .36, \ CI = [.15, .57]; \ \beta_{\text{barriers}} = .10, \ CI = [.01, .21]$). Similarly, the impacts of cues to action through perceived benefits and barriers on purchase intention were significant: $\beta_{\text{benefits}} = .24, \ CI = [.18, .31]$ and $\beta_{\text{barriers}} = .03, \ CI = [.01, .06]$. However, the mediating effects of the perceived benefits of and barriers to CBD between reputation and purchase intention were not found ($\beta_{\text{benefits}} = .07, \ CI = [-.15, .29]; \ \beta_{\text{barriers}} = -.00, \ CI = [-.01, .09]$).

This study also hypothesized whether perceived threats to one’s health moderates the indirect effect of the proposed three predictors on CBC purchase intention through perceived benefits and barriers. The results showed that customers with a high level of perceived threats are more likely to purchase CBD products when perceiving CBD’s benefits through cues to action, compared to those perceiving a low level of threat to their health. Other independent variables (i.e., brand reputation and certification), however, yielded insignificant moderated mediation.
Regarding perceived barriers to CBD, the indirect effects of certification on purchase intention were observed for those with moderate to high perceived threats, but not for those with low perceived threats ($\beta = .04, CI = [.00, .09]$). In other words, perceived barriers to CBD were only a significant mediator for individuals with moderate to high perceived threats to their health, but not for those with low perceived threats.

**Key Contributions**

Despite rapid growth in the cannabis industry and customers’ growing interest in cannabis products, there has been little investigation of how customers perceive and evaluate the product category and how such perceptions influence their purchase decision. This study focuses on Cannabidiol (CBD)-rich products, excluding products containing Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). Testing a theoretical framework based on the Health Belief Model (HBM), this study provides the insights from an experimental study of two external cues: brand reputation and certification. The certification approved by qualified organizations or government agencies is found to increase the perceived benefits and decrease the perceived barriers to CBD, while brand reputation does not. Cues to action (e.g., expert recommendations and media messages) also impact the perceived benefits and barriers, resulting in the purchase of CBD. Furthermore, the perceived threats to one’s health intervene in mediating the impacts of customer perceptions on purchase intention. To our knowledge, this research is the first empirical study of customer perceptions and behaviors related to CBD products, and it extends our knowledge of health behaviors.

Additionally, this study provides insights to marketing practitioners in the cannabis industry. CBD manufacturers and licensed cultivators should focus more on obtaining certification than on building brand reputation, possibly due to the novelty and limited
availability of CBD to U.S. consumers. Considering the importance of certification in increasing the perception of benefits and reducing the barriers, government agencies and policy makers can collaborate with the cannabis industry to provide safer and more reliable products. Lastly, customers acquire information from a variety of cues (i.e., professionals, the media, friends) before purchasing CBD. This indicates that educating customers with accurate information is crucial because diffusion of incorrect information may jeopardize public health and well-being.

References are available upon request.
THE SPECTER OF DEATH AND THE DESIRE TO COMPETE: THE INFLUENCE OF MORTALITY SALIENCE DUE TO COVID ON THE EVALUATION OF EXCLUSIVE LUXURIES.

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Keywords: Mortality salience, vertical individualism, exclusive luxuries

Description: Using terror management theory (TMT), this study examines the effects of mortality salience (MS) due to COVID on consumer evaluations of exclusive luxury product.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question-
Mortality Salience (MS) literature claims that one method people typically use to fortify themselves against the fear of death is reinforcing their cultural worldviews and (therefore) their self-esteem (Greenberg et al., 1994). MS literature has suggested a clear link between MS and desirability towards possessions (e.g., Mandel & Heine, 1999; Kasser & Sheldon, 2000), establishing that MS enhances desire for products that are considered indicators of high-status.
(e.g., Lexus automobiles, Rolex watches) because obtaining these kinds of possessions functions as a cushion against the anxiety of existential threat (Mandel et al., 1999). In this study, we examine the link between mortality salience (MS) due to the specific event of COVID-19 on evaluations of exclusive luxury products. Additionally, we examine the role of vertical individualism (VI) in moderating the MS effect due to COVID-19, on evaluations of exclusive luxury products. We propose the following hypotheses:

**H1:** Mortality salience (MS) due to COVID-19 leads to higher product evaluation for exclusive luxuries.

**H2:** The effect of mortality salience (MS) on product evaluation of exclusive (vs. generic) luxuries depends on consumers’ vertical individualism (VI). For people with high (vs. low) VI, MS leads to higher product evaluation of exclusive (vs. generic) luxury product.

**Method and Data**

We conducted two online experiments, to examine the effect of MS due to COVID-19 on the attitude toward exclusive luxury products, and to examine the moderating role of VI on this effect. Both experiments were conducted in America when social distancing was being practiced due to COVID-19. The first experiment was conducted when a “lockdown” was announced in many states in America. The second experiment was conducted during a period when shelter-in-place conditions applied in many American states. Study 1 employed a single-factor experimental design, and our aim was to understand the main effect of MS due to COVID-19 on the product evaluation of exclusive luxuries. A total of 185 valid responses were collected via MTurk. Participants’ mean age was 37.1 (sd = 11.5) years and 57.8% (42.2%) of the participants were male (female). In Study 2, we used a 2 (mortality salience: death-related thoughts vs. a particular incident) by 2 (type of luxuries: exclusive vs. generic luxuries) between-subjects factorial design.
Study 2 examined the moderating role of VI. A total of 336 valid responses were collected via MTurk. Participants’ mean age was 38.0 (sd = 11.5) years and 59.9% (40.1%) of the participants were male (female).

**Summary of Findings**

In Study 1, the effects of MS on product evaluation of exclusive luxuries were examined. The results showed that MS enhanced participants’ product evaluation of exclusive luxuries. When request was made to the participants that they describe thoughts of their own death, they showed higher purchase intention of exclusive luxuries compared to when asked to report past events ($M_{ms} = 5.35, sd = 1.39$, $M_{control} = 4.82, sd = 1.62$, $t(183) = -2.35$, $p = .02$). Therefore, H1 was supported.

Study 2 compared the effect of MS due to COVID-19 for exclusive vs. generic luxuries and measured the level of consumer’ VI. The results showed a significant interaction effect of MS, product type, and VI on product evaluation ($b = .50$, $se = .20$, $t = 2.44$, $p = .02$). For people with high VI, MS led to a more positive product evaluation for exclusive luxuries ($b = .48$, $se = .24$, $t = 1.97$, $p = .05$), but not for generic luxuries. For people with low VI, MS did not have any effect on product evaluation for exclusive luxuries ($b = -.28$, $se = .22$, $t = -1.27$, $p = .21$) or generic luxuries. As such, H2 was supported.

**Key Contributions**

The research makes important theoretical contributions to two streams of research. We have merged two bodies of literature (i.e., MS & cultural orientation). Our findings show that for individuals with high VI, MS due to COVID-19 leads to positive effect on attitude toward exclusive (vs. generic) luxury product. The opposite is true for individuals with low VI. We believe this result offers interesting findings which enrich the literature on VI and MS (e.g., Zhang &
Nelson 2016; Kasser et al., 2000; Mandel et al., 1999). Our research has also added interesting insights to the literature on cultural psychology by studying the connection between VI and terror management theory (TMT). Our research highlights an important effect on the evaluations of exclusive luxury product. Our research shows that death related thoughts due to COVID-19 induce positive attitude toward exclusive luxury product. The implication of this research is profound for marketing managers of luxury brands. Our findings show that during COVID-19, vertically oriented messages (e.g., messages focusing on improving individual status via competition, messages focusing on displaying status or success) from exclusive luxury products will induce vertical individualists to form positive attitudes toward such products.

“References are available upon request.”
TOO LITTLE TO CLEAN IT UP: THE EFFECT OF PACKAGE SIZE ON PERCEIVED EFFICACY OF HOUSEHOLD CLEARNING PRODUCT

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Keywords: Package size, Product efficacy, Adequacy perception, Household clean products

Description: This research shows that household clean products in a larger package are rated more efficacious than the equivalent product in a smaller package due to the increased adequacy perception to solve the problems (remove dirt or bacteria).
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Marketers offer different package sizes to meet consumers’ different needs, especially in fast-moving consumer goods including food, drinks, and household clean products (Zlatevska, Dubelaar, & Holden, 2014). Existing research suggests that differentiation in package size is associated with perceived quality and effectiveness of products, such that products in a small container are rated to be of high quality due to the higher unit price perception (Mathur & Qiu, 2012; Yan et al., 2014). However, it is unknown if the small size-high quality notion applies across all product categories?

We propose that the above-mentioned relationship doesn’t apply to household clean products. High-frequency usage of household clean products (e.g., laundry detergent, hand sanitizer) leads to the perception that products in small sizes will be used out quickly and thus leave the impression of low product adequacy. Meanwhile, the amount of usage of household cleaning products is positively related to the cleaning effectiveness. For example, using more hand sanitizer is expected to remove the bacteria more efficiently than using just a few drops of one. Therefore, the association of usage amount and effectiveness biased consumers’ product efficacy perception to the same product in different package sizes and leads to the concern that small-sized products cannot perform effectively as well as the large-sized products.

Method and Data

A pilot study collected online reviews of nine typical household clean products
including hand sanitizer, shampoo, laundry detergent, and dishwashing liquid in big and small sizes from Tmall online supermarket (https://chaoshi.tmall.com). For each product in two sizes, we calculated the ratio of the number of reviews that mentioned positive feedback about product efficacy to the total number of reviews respectively.

Study 1 tested the main effect and mechanism. Participants were shown a picture of either a small (200ml) or a large (1000ml) bottle of Head & Shoulders shampoo. They evaluated the perceived efficacy among two items ($\alpha = 0.63$), “How effective do you think the shampoo can remove dandruff?” and “How much do you think the shampoo would help can remove oil?” (1 = Not at all, 10 = Extremely), and rated adequacy perception (Ilyuk & Block, 2016) of the shampoo.

Study 2 replicated the main effect when providing price information. We present a picture of either a small (50ml) or a large (500ml) bottle of the Dettol hand sanitizer with a constant unit price (0.298 RMB) and the corresponding overall price (14.9 RMB for small size; 149 RMB for big size). Then, participants evaluated the product efficacy as in study 1.

Summary of Findings

The pilot study found that the number of positive reviews of a big-sized product are significantly greater than that of the same small-sized product ($M_{\text{big}} = 0.74$, $SD = 0.58$; $M_{\text{small}} = 0.20$, $SD = 0.21$; $t(16) = -2.62$, $p = .025$). Study 1 showed that participants believed the shampoo in 1000ml bottle was more effective that the same shampoo in 200ml bottle ($M_{\text{big}} = 8.35$, $SD = 0.92$; $M_{\text{small}} = 8.03$, $SD = 0.96$; $t(139) = -2.01$, $p = .046$) and the effect was fully mediated by perceived product adequacy (B
Study 2 revealed that when the price information becomes explicit, participants still perceived larger-sized products to be more efficacious than the small-sized products ($M_{big} = 7.63, SD = 0.76; M_{small} = 7.06, SD = 0.76; t(98) = -3.74, p<.001$).

**Key Contributions**

This research contributes to the existing literature in two ways. First, this research adds to the recent and growing body of work concerning the effects of packaging size on quality perception. The results prove that the positive size-quality linkage established by prior works doesn’t apply to all product categories. Differ from the previous findings, this paper suggests that larger-sized household clean products are judged more favorable in quality (in terms of efficacy). Due to the product attributes and usage scenario, product dosage is positively related to clean effectiveness. Therefore, large-sized products seem to be more adequate to solve the problems (remove the dirt or bacteria), which in turn elicit higher efficacy perception. Second, the mediating role of product adequacy enables us to provide a new explanation for the size–quality link. Unlike Yan, Sengupta, and Wyer Jr’s (2014) work, the results suggest that the effect of size on quality perception is unrelated to unit price. This research confirms that product adequacy drives consumers’ perception that products in large package are more efficacious. From a practical perspective, this research provides useful implications to marketers of household cleaning products. Marketers can increase consumers’ favorable evaluation of the product efficacy by simply increasing the package size of the product.
References are available upon request.
TRUST, SATISFACTION, LOYALTY AND INTENTIONS IN THE SHARING ECONOMY: RESEARCH PROPOSITIONS

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Keywords: Sharing economy, trust, satisfaction, loyalty, platform, service provider

Description: This paper examines the relationships between trust, satisfaction, and customer loyalty and intentions to use in the pre- and post-purchase situations in the sharing economy and offer propositions for future research and managerial implications.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

The sharing economy (SE) has been altering marketing in many ways. As Eckardt et al. (2019) indicate, in the SE environment, buyers and sellers exchange products and services with temporary access (not permanent ownership); share them with both economic and social motives; technical platforms facilitate efficient transactions while matching providers with users; and customers take on enhanced roles as both producers and users (prosumers).

Exemplified by these changes, the transformation of marketing and consumption in the SE has
spawned new questions about marketing. A significant challenge that the transformation to the SE has generated is a deeper understanding of how value is created and appropriated in the SE. The relative importance of the drivers of sharing utility will change and new drivers will emerge. A second important question that requires deeper understanding relates to the possible roles that Trust (T), Satisfaction (S), and Loyalty (L) play in the shaping of the purchase and re-purchase intentions and the development of long-term customer commitment. The SE has likely altered how each of these operate in the consumption process when compared to their roles in traditional economic exchange. A third question concerns the shaping of identity in SE exchanges and the relative influence that culture and varying cultural environments may play in the definition and consumption of SE.

**Summary of Findings**

Drawing on the studies on S, T and L in the e-commerce and marketing literatures, we propose in this paper a model of consumer trust and satisfaction in the context of the SE. We posit that for new customers, trust in the platform and trust in the service provider are key ingredients of the intention to use a sharing platform. Following Reichheld and Schefter (2000), we propose that T is the most likely attribute to affect customers’ willingness to use a sharing platform. For repeat customers, T is also a major determinant of repurchase intention for relational customers. S is a dominant antecedent to post-purchase trust; and in turn, the increments in T will increase the embeddedness of customer relationships, enhancing L in the longer run. We also highlight
a unique cultural orientation – uncertainty avoidance because we suspect that the effect of trust on the intention to use would not occur uniformly across all cultures. We posit that the effect of T on intention to use will be greater in high uncertainty avoidance cultures (e.g., Japan) than in low uncertainty avoidance cultures (e.g., the United States).

**Key Contributions**

Our research is exploratory; we perform emotion classification analysis on selected Airbnb reviews and learn that T and S are critical underlying factors that will influence consumers’ willingness to participate in the SE and their continuous involvement in that economy; we review the literature on the sharing economy and forward propositions for empirical research. We contribute to a deeper understanding of consumer behavior in the SE, especially how consumers construct and interpret the meanings of T, S and L in their marketing experiences, and by extension, the interplay among these constructs as they drive consumer choices in the pre- and post-purchase contexts. Our work should inspire marketing managers to develop a better understanding of the significance of establishing trust in the digital environment and the influence that trust in the platform will have on enhancing purchase intentions and repeat purchases by e-loyal customers. Moreover, we examine the extent to which cultural influences, such as uncertainty avoidance, will moderate the relationships between trust and behavioral outcomes of SE exchanges. Our work should also aid policy makers in developing institutions and regulatory frameworks that will help SE actors operate more effectively in the SE.
UNDERSTANDING THE VARIOUS WAYS CONSUMERS COPE WITH A PANDEMIC CRISIS-A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

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Keywords: COVID-19 Pandemic, Crisis, Self-Affirmation, Coping Mechanism

Description: This paper is a qualitative research project that analyzes consumer behavior during a pandemic crisis.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question: What are the different ways that consumer behavior has changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Method and Data: This research conducted in-depth interviews to collect data.

Summary of Findings: A coherent conceptual framework emerged which explains the negative emotions consumer are dealing with at the time of a pandemic crisis. The framework also demonstrates the different routes consumers take to sail through those hardships and conquer negativities. Specifically, it is shown that consumers deal with negativities such as denial, uncertainty, anxiety, and concerns and try to overcome these through changes in priorities, hope, taking control and being in charge, and self-awareness.

Key Contributions: As people’s consumption and social behavior have changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative that firms understand they will be dealing with the “New Normal”. An important implication from this research is that consumers would value those firms with offerings that help alleviate negativities.
WHEN CONSUMERS DECREASE ETHICAL BEHAVIOR

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Keywords: ethical behavior, consumers, intentions, scarcity, resources

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

We identify a novel relationship between scarcity and ethical behavior: when resource scarcity is made salient, consumers engage in less ethical behavior, and the effect of resource scarcity on ethical behavior is stronger for consumers with high (vs. low) levels of the inclusion of others in the self (IOS).

The messages of scarcity are pervasive in society. Consumers often encounter the images of empty shelves or the pages of out-of-stock items on retailer’s websites in a pandemic. Faced with resource scarcity, consumers exhibit various responses including narrowed attention (Shah et al. 2012), higher calorie consumption (Briers and Laporte 2013), and decreased life satisfaction (Hill et al. 2012). Previous research further suggests that people with fewer resources engage in suboptimal behavior, such as bad financial decision-making (Barr 2012), excessive lottery purchases (Haisley et al. 2008), and unreasonable borrowing at high-interest rates (Dobbie and Skiba 2013). Broadly speaking, these patterns of suboptimal behavior may pertain to ethical issues.
**Research Question**

The present research investigates how scarcity affects consumers’ ethical intentions. Scarcity is defined as “sensing or observing a discrepancy between one’s current level of resources and a higher, more desirable reference point” (Cannon et al. 2019). Scarcity creates its own mindset, changing how people look at problems and make decisions (Shah et al. 2012). Individuals who experience resource scarcity increase their focus on the “here and now” and pay less attention to the future consequences of their decisions. When resources are perceived as scarce, consumers gravitate toward a more self-centered mindset, focused on the present scarcity issue (Mullainathan and Shafir 2013). There is also evidence that consumers may disengage from other-focused or prosocial behaviors and engage in self-focused or antisocial behaviors (Levontin et al. 2015). When it comes to ethical behavior, Low and Davenport (2007) posit that ethical individuals express concern in one of the following areas: human welfare, animal welfare, and environmental welfare, and these areas have the prerequisite of other-focused mindsets. Together, we predict that consumers who are faced with resource scarcity will decrease ethical intentions. Formally:

**H1:** When resource scarcity is made salient, consumers engage in less ethical behavior.

For our main prediction, we identify interconnectedness with others as one boundary condition. Specifically, we focus on “the inclusion of others in the self” (IOS), which refers to the interconnectedness between oneself and others (Aron et al. 1992). IOS indicates overlapping
of selves where characteristics, attributes, and thoughts of the other are viewed to be part of one’s self (Aron et al. 1992). This overlap may lead to a confusion of self with others (Mashek et al. 2007). Thus, people with high (vs. low) levels of IOS may assume that other people would think and behave as they do. Put differently, consumers who engage in less ethical behavior may reinforce such behavior when their IOS levels are high (vs. low). Formally:

H2: The effect of resource scarcity on ethical behavior is stronger for consumers with high (vs. low) levels of IOS.

In what follows, we report two experiments. Experiment 1 examines the effect of resource scarcity on ethical consumption. Experiment 2 provides evidence that the effect observed in Experiment 1 is pronounced strongly for consumers high in IOS.

Method and Data

Experiment 1

We recruited 123 MTurkers (52.8% female; M_{age} = 41.88, SD = 13.74). The study had a two-group between-subjects design (scarcity vs. control). We first manipulated scarcity with an episodic recall task adapted from Fischhoff et al. (2003). Participants in the scarcity condition were asked to take three minutes and describe three or four instances where they felt like they “didn’t have enough of something” or “resources were scarce.” Those in the control condition wrote about their daily routine or tasks they completed the previous day. Participants were then
asked to indicate their ethical consumption tendency at that present moment, adapted from Paek and Nelson (2009), on a 7-point scale (e.g., “I would avoid buying products or services from companies that discriminate against minorities”) and the items were averaged to form a combined measure (α = .904).

As predicted, participants in the scarcity condition reported significantly lower ethical consumption intentions ($M = 5.01; SD = 1.18$), relative to the control condition ($M = 5.47; SD = .95$; $F(1, 122) = 5.66; p = .02; Cohen’s d = .42$). The pattern of results remained significant when we controlled for childhood socioeconomic status (SES) and current SES. These results supported our hypothesis that resource scarcity lowers ethical consumption. We further ruled out the possibility that SES would affect the observed effect.

Experiment 2

We recruited 89 MTurkers (60% female; $M_{age} = 44.70$, $SD = 12.83$). The study had a two-group between-subjects design (scarcity vs. control). To manipulate the experimental conditions, we used the same writing tasks as in Experiment 1. For our dependent measure, we asked participants to indicate their ethical behavioral intentions at that present moment using seven items adapted from Welsh and Ordóñez (2014) and complete two ethical dilemma scenarios adapted from Gino et al. (2010), all on 7-point scales. We combined these scales to form a composite measure of ethical behavior ($α = .88$). Finally, participants completed the IOS measure (Aron et al., 1992) and the 20-item PANAS measure (Watson et al. 1988), all on 7-point scales ($α_{positive} = .87$, $α_{negative} = .93$).
There was a significant main effect of scarcity on ethical behavior, relative to the control condition ($M_{\text{scarcity}} = 2.07$, $M_{\text{control}} = 2.71$; $F(1, 88) = 6.77$; $p = .01$), replicating Experiment 1. To test our moderation model, we used Hayes (2017) Model 1. There was a significant two-way interaction between scarcity and IOS ($b = -14$, 95% CI [-0.2718 to -0.0071], $t = -2.10$, $p = .04$). Participants in the scarcity condition reported significantly less ethical intentions when their IOS levels were high ($b = -53$, 95% CI [-0.8548 to -0.2133], $t = -3.31$, $p < .01$), supporting our hypothesis. The pattern of results remained significant when we controlled for the PANAS scores.

**Summary of Findings**

Our research introduces resource scarcity as a novel antecedent of ethical consumption and behavioral intentions. Further, we show that such ethical intentions are strongly associated with how individuals view the self in relation to others. We plan to examine the link between types of relationships and ethicality, as well as possible underlying processes for the effect observed in our studies.

**Key Contributions**

Our research’s contributions to academia are twofold. First, we identify a novel relationship of scarcity and ethical behavior, and we show evidence for this relationship using two different contexts: ethical consumption and ethical behavior intentions. Second, we investigate a negative consequence of inclusion of other in self (IOS). Typically, the effects
of IOS are investigated in a positive light, however, we demonstrate that under perceptions of scarcity, IOS may strengthen the effect that scarcity has on one’s ethical behavior. We add to findings of Benavidez et al. (2016) who found participants with high levels of IOS were more aggressive than their low IOS counterparts toward a hypothetical moral violation.

Importantly, this research also suggests that scarcity marketing messages may impact downstream ethical behavior. Policy makers and marketing managers should be aware that what is good for business may not be good for consumer well-being. Further, as consumers feel a higher level of IOS and interconnectedness the effects of scarcity may be amplified, and thus one could expect consumer reactions to perceptions of scarcity to be more drastic. Thus, when considering a marketing campaign specific attention should be paid to the possible downstream effects of the chosen ad type.
WHY NOT SET PEN TO PAPER?
HOW TYPEFACE DESIGN INFLUENCE CHARITABLE BEHAVIORS

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Keyword: Typeface design, Connectedness, Charitable appeal type, Brand attachment, Charitable behavior

Description: The typeface design in a charitable appeal affects consumers’ evaluations of the ad and, in turn, their willingness to engage in the advertised charitable activities.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Receiving a handwritten letter or card is a memorable experience. Especially now that typing on a keyboard allows the message to be transmitted to the recipient in the blink of an eye. Consider a handwritten (vs. typewritten) postcard regarding fundraising for a project to sponsor children. How does the recipient feel? Does it increase the likelihood that the recipient will provide the requested help?

Consumers often rely on visual representations (e.g., text or pictures) to make decisions regarding charitable activities (Cryder, Botti, and Simonyan 2017). However, visual elements such as the typeface remain unexplored in the context of charitable appeals. The aim of the current research is to explore whether people facing a charitable appeal that uses a
handwritten (vs. typewritten) typeface design are more willing to engage in the advertised charitable activities and conduct charitable behavior.

We consider two moderators: charitable appeal type (other-benefit vs. self-benefit) and brand attachment (strong vs. weak). We suggest that a handwritten typeface creates feelings of connectedness, leading to a more positive effect when an other-benefit (vs. self-benefit) charitable appeal is used and when the viewer is not strongly connected to the brand (vs. having a strong brand attachment).

**Method and Data**

Total five studies, including a field study were conducted.

The first study was a pilot study and a field experiment, while studies 1 and 2 were lab experiments. The three studies were a single-factor (typeface: handwritten vs. typewritten) between-subjects design. The result of the pilot study showed that the handwritten (vs. typewritten) donation box raised more money on average. The same results were replicated in studies 1 and 2 using donation likelihood as the dependent variable. Furthermore, in Study 2, we confirmed that feeling of connectedness is the underlying mechanism.

Study 3 had a 2 (typeface: handwritten vs. typewritten) x 2 (charitable appeal: other-benefit vs. self-benefit) between-subjects design. Study 4 had a 2 (typeface: handwritten vs. typewritten) x 2 (brand attachment: strong vs. weak) between-subjects design with real customers drawn from the loyalty program of a skincare brand in China. As expected, participants who viewed the handwritten message in the ad showing a greater donation likelihood to the charity when other-benefit charitable appeal was used and when the viewer was not strongly connected to the brand. No such differences were observed on participants in the self-benefit charitable appeal condition and in the strong brand attachment condition.
Summary of Findings

In the current, we demonstrated that using a handwritten (vs. typewritten) typeface design in a charity ad increases the consumer’s willingness to conduct those charitable behaviors (pilot study, Studies 1 and 2). We further confirmed the mediation role of feeling of connectedness (Study 2). Moreover, the positive effects of the handwritten typeface can be eliminated or enhanced, depending on the type of charitable appeal (Study 3) and the level of consumer-brand attachment (Study 4).

Key Contributions

This research extends the research on visual design elements in charitable appeals by focusing on typeface design (handwritten vs. typewritten), contributes to the literature that even a subtle manipulation of typeface design can enhance the effectiveness of a charity ad. We suggest that the choice of typeface design should be dependent upon the type of charitable appeal and the strength of the relationship between the target consumers and the brand. The current research also extends the humanization literature, suggesting that a handwritten typeface is also a viable humanization strategy, contributed to the literature on perceived connectedness.

The current research offers rich managerial implications for non-academic stakeholder. We have explored handwriting as an important factor in a charitable appeal, providing brand managers an actionable strategy of how and when considering a handwritten typeface design in their charitable activity, especially when consumers are not strongly attached to the brand or when using an other-benefit charitable appeal. Moreover, the current research provides guidelines that can help social marketers and charity fundraisers in deciding the typeface design.
Social Media and Digital Marketing
#INFERTILITY –

DEALING WITH TABOO TOPICS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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Keywords: social media, taboo, stigma, motives, blogging

Description: Employing a netnographic approach, this research identified three overarching motives for discussing taboo topics in social media: (1) the satisfaction of one's own needs, (2) the support of others, and (3) the de-tabooing of the topic and sensitization of the society.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Social media platforms have become an integral part of our daily lives. People use social media predominantly for two reasons: namely, self-presentation and sense of belonging. However, we know little about the role of social media in the context of topics that tend to be not talked about in public. In particular, in light of previous research on social media, it seems rather paradoxical that taboo topics also show a strong presence on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Thus, this research aims at exploring the underlying motives to discuss taboo topics publicly on social media. This is investigated in the context of involuntary childlessness.

Method and Data

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the social media use of fertility patients, we employed a netnographic approach, which is particularly suitable for sensitive contexts. We conducted a keyword search on YouTube and Instagram in German and expanded the top search results using the snowball method (e.g., recommendations based on viewed YouTube videos). This way we identified a large number of private users who regularly post on the topic of involuntary childlessness. Out of this, a sample of bloggers as heterogeneous as possible was selected and several posts per blogger were captured and coded. From the data material – comprising 5.5 hours of video material from 23 videos, 47 Instagram posts and more than 2,800 comments – categories were formed inductively. Data collection and analysis took place in parallel mode, until new data did not add any more insights (conceptual saturation).

Summary of Findings

We identified three different roles of social media bloggers when posting about involuntary childlessness: (1) the patient role, (2) the supporter role, and (3) the influencer role. Each role
pursues a different overarching motive. When bloggers talk as patients, they aim to satisfy their own needs. Taking on the supporter role, they support other people suffering from infertility in satisfying their related needs. In their role as influencers, bloggers create awareness for the topic, de-taboo the issue, and contribute to the sensitization of society. Furthermore, we identified three fertility-related needs that play a significant role in the use of social media: (1) the need for information, (2) the need for emotional support, and (3) the need for sharing experiences. We found that high psychological distress, which is associated with involuntary childlessness and fertility treatment, is a key factor for the emergence of the three identified needs and the resulting motives for social media use. Therefore, we assume that our findings can be generalized to other taboo topics that involve high psychological distress.

**Key Contributions**

From a theoretical perspective, we contribute to social media research in the context of taboo topics, a rather neglected area in extant literature. The motive of self-expression, previously assumed as being most important, is not decisive for social media use in the context of taboo topics. In contrast, support of others, a motive generally considered less relevant, plays a key role. Overall, we show that motives for using social media in the context of taboo topics differ largely from those of general social media use. From a managerial perspective, we encourage fertility centers to consider social media websites as an opportunity rather than a risk, to establish platforms where patients can share experiences with other patients and this way enhance well-being of current and future patients. The high psychological distress of patients makes patient support an important task for fertility centers. Our study shows that social media can provide extensive informational and emotional support and help satisfying the need for sharing experiences. Furthermore, the public perception of involuntary childlessness as a taboo
topic represents a barrier for potential patients to seek medical help. Our results demonstrate the potential of social media for de-tabooing and sensitization of the society.

References are available upon request.
CANDIDATE SENTIMENT, TRADITIONAL, OWNED AND EARNED SOCIAL MEDIA: THE ROLE OF FAN FOLLOWING IN INFLUENCING VOTING INTENTIONS

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Keywords: Earned Social Media; Owned Social Media; Sentiment analysis; Social Identity Theory; Traditional media

Description: We use Social Identity Theory to unite media and sentiment lines of research which have not been related to each other in previous investigations of political marketing researach
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question
Social Identity Theory is a perspective of the socially constructed self. This theory explains individual and group processes in intergroup behaviors, clarifies psychological identity and concentrates on the mechanisms between individuals and social groups that determine inclinations to behave according to group norms. Our theoretical model draws on Social Identity Theory to explain how candidate sentiment, earned, owned and traditional media influence voting intention. Voters have a repertoire of category memberships (e.g., political affiliations or ideology inclinations) that describe and prescribe individual attributes as members of a recognized group. Social identity with the group is defined by means of cognitive (self-categorization), evaluative (a value connotation self-esteem), and emotional (affective commitment) structures. We hypothesize that fans create social connections with political candidates because they reinforce beliefs, self-concepts and self-identities. Thus, we propose for hypotheses that results in implications on voting intention levels.

Method and Data
We registered daily activity from candidates on social media and mentions on traditional media between August, 31st, 2018, and October, 31st, 2018. We collected data on social media platforms (Instagram and Twitter) from the selected candidates. Candidate fan following is the number of candidates’ followers on Instagram and Twitter and refers to the sum of daily followers per day in candidates’ official profiles. Earned social media is the candidate-related media generated through social online interactions. We used two measures for assessing earned social media, daily comments on Instagram and impressions on Twitter. Owned social media is the candidate-generated media through its social channel, which are under his/her control. Owned
social media refers to the number of total posts on a candidate’s official social media channel per day. Traditional media is the number of mentions in nine Brazilian news portals. Candidate Sentiment is a valence measure that encompasses positive, negative and neutral information from candidates, while voting intention is the daily voting intention levels for each candidate.

**Summary of Findings**
Results reveal a significant moderating effect of fan following on candidate sentiment indicating that fans pose as ambassadors, legitimizing supported candidates’, reinforcing negative sentiments, self-concepts and self-identities. Fan following moderates the effect of earned social media and this finding supports the second hypothesis. We additionally find an interaction effect of fan following on owned social media that supports the third hypothesis. Finally, candidate fan following amplifies the main effect of traditional media, supporting the fourth hypothesis. By drawing on elements such as self-categorization and self-identity from Social Identity Theory, we delineate how social media elements influence voting intention. First, in-group voters provide earned social media for candidates by discussing their positive distinctiveness, pools’ results toward their choices, government plans and other information that evoke an in-group favoritism. Second, voters want to share candidates owned social media for their social in-group, evoking voters’ engagement in prosocial behaviors toward the supported candidate.

**Key Contributions**
Our approach contributes to a body of research built under a traditional model of political communication that disregards influential individuals capable of reinforcing social connections with potential voters. A critical question for managers is how they should invest on different social media platforms. Candidates heavily invest on
platforms, such as Twitter and Instagram, to develop communication strategies with potential voters. They should then consider the existence of interactive resources (e.g., interface, videos, impressions) as our research shows that Instagram and Twitter create different effects for sentiment and media. We additionally provide social media elements and integrate them in a theoretical framework in line with arguments for a more modernized and scientific political marketing theory, centered on the voter and on diverse factors of the political marketplace. We also ground our theoretical arguments in suggesting fan followers as ambassadors. The basis for this argument is that fans support candidates’ positions and spread the social media content to their followers.
CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT BEHAVIOURS WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

INFLUENCERS’ ONLINE PRODUCT REVIEWS

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Keywords: Social media influencers; Online product reviews; Consumer engagement; Opinion leadership; Parasocial interaction

Description: This study investigates social media influencers’ cues of persuasion, jointly with other essential communication elements, impacting on consumer engagement behaviours (CEBs).

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

The internet and social media have increased consumers' access to information to help them make purchases. Bloggers and vloggers have emerged, attracting and influencing followers through their generated content, such as online product reviews. While researchers disagree on the definition of this type of influencer (Kay et al., 2020), practitioners commonly refer to
anyone who achieves fame and influence through their social media posts as a social media influencer (Kotler & Keller, 2016) and attempt to target these "online ambassadors" (De Veirman et al., 2019). This research aims to address the question of how social media influencers’ characteristics acting as persuasive cues affect consumer engagement behaviours with the product review elements: intention to interact with the posts [II]; intention to follow advice about the product/brand embedded in the post [IF]; and intention to recommend the social media influencer [IR].

Using social communication theory (Hovland & Weiss, 1951) and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), this study developed a research model that incorporates online opinion leadership [OOL] and parasocial interaction [PSI] (two source characteristics), message quality [MQ] (message characteristic), online interaction propensity [OIP] (receiver characteristic) and consumer engagement behaviours [II, IF, and IR] (consumers’ responses).

**Method and Data**

An online survey was conducted with Vietnamese consumers who had viewed product reviews as part of their information search using the convenience sampling method. This high-involvement type of product was chosen because information searches are typically conducted prior to making a purchase. Given the frequency with which new smartphone models are released, interested consumers would be wise to monitor the category. The link to the Google Form-based questionnaire was promoted on social platforms such as technology and gadget discussion forums and Facebook fan pages.

The following scales were adopted in the study: OOL by Casaló et al. (2020); PSI by Labrecque (2014); MQ by Le et al. (2020); II by Algesheimer et al. (2005); IF by Casaló et al. (2010); IR by Al-Ansi et al. (2019); and OIP by Labrecque (2014). Respondents rated their agreement with scale statements using the five-point Likert scale. Following quality control, the 371 usable
responses were analysed using PLS-SEM with SmartPLS 3.0. PLS-SEM outperforms other methods in terms of testing complex models and requires less stringent assumptions about multivariate normality and sample size (Hair et al., 2019).

**Summary of Findings**

Analytical analyses revealed that the scales met the threshold requirements for reliability (factor loadings >0.5), convergent validity (composite reliability values >0.6; average variance explained values >0.5), and discriminant validity (HTMT ratio of correlations <0.9) (Hair et al., 2019). The model explained 49.8% of the variation in II, 54.4% of the variation in IF, 54.7% of the variation in IR, and 55.4% of the variation in MQ. Respective cross-validated redundancy $Q^2$ values (0.272; 0.356; 0.329; and 0.283) indicated that the model has moderate predictive accuracy and that endogenous variables have predictive relevance with their respective predecessors (Hair et al., 2019).

The results showed that OOL and PSI have significant impact ($\beta = 0.319$, $p<0.001$ and $\beta = 0.512$, $p<0.001$, respectively) on MQ, which in turn has significant impact on the following consumer engagement behaviours: II ($\beta = 0.390$, $p<0.001$), IF ($\beta = 0.558$, $p<0.001$), and IR ($\beta = 0.559$, $p<0.001$). OIP also has significant influence on II ($\beta = 0.400$, $p<0.001$); IF ($\beta = 0.286$, $p<0.001$); and IR ($\beta = 0.278$, $p<0.001$). At $\alpha = 10\%$, OIP was also found to moderate the effect of MQ on II.

**Key Contributions**

This study adds to the body of knowledge in the field of communication by investigating how consumers process persuasive cues and information about products/brands that are presented to them via the online environment. The research highlights the significance of four critical factors in social media influencer marketing: online opinion leadership, parasocial interaction, message quality, and trait-based online interaction propensity. Furthermore, the study contributes to the
literature on consumer engagement by revealing findings about consumer engagement with scantly researched focal objects that are social media influencers and their online product reviews. Furthermore, the research provides support for the causality of information processing routes in the Elaboration Likelihood Model when consumers are exposed to a large amount of information on online platforms and are unable to process the information thoroughly.

In practice, the findings regarding the extent to which social media influencers’ persuasive cues influence MQ have implications for managers developing digital marketing strategies that include influencer marketing. Marketers must identify social media influencers and target them with appropriate communication strategies in order to influence their generated and disseminated content. Marketers can use the discovery that providing MQ could benefit social media influencers in terms of increased popularity in approaching and persuading them to collaborate for a win-win situation.

References are available upon request.
DETERMINANTS OF CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT IN BRAND COMMUNITIES ON INSTAGRAM: AN ELABORATION LIKELIHOOD MODEL PERSPECTIVE

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Keywords: Social Media, Brand Fan Pages, AI-Driven Posts, Consumer Engagement, Personalized Experience

Description

The main purpose of this study is to explore the effect of post quality characteristic (AI-driven posts vs. non-AI-driven posts) and post content type (utilitarian posts vs. hedonic posts) on customers’ motivations toward engaging with brand fan pages on Instagram.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT
An increasing number of brands have developed online brand communities on various social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram, to advertise, promote, and communicate their offerings to their customers and to engage them so as to create long-term customer-firm relationships (Zaglia, 2013). However, the nature of open and independent social media allows customers to easily turn to other social network platforms for similar offerings (Zhang et al., 2017). To acquire more active customers and boost returns on the investments made in launching online brand communities, it is necessary for brand and social media managers to understand details of customer insights about their motivations for engaging in brand communities on social media and the resulting benefits.

A central element of social media is the extent to which it enables brands and customers to connect, communicate and engage. The brand fan pages on social media offer various experiences based on their functionality and appeal (e.g., easy product search and evaluation, up-to-date information, and visually appealing interface) are not only the primary basis that customers look for while making decisions but also shape their initial impressions of a brand fan page and subsequent adoption or engagement (Ashraf et al., 2016).

Among various social media, Instagram, which was launched in 2010, allows users to share images and videos in both public and private ways, and other users can view, comment and click on the “like” button for photos and videos. Instagram has
rapidly gained popularity, with nearly 1 billion monthly active users as of January 2020, many of whom are young users (Adespresso, 2020; Casaló et al., 2017; Wikipedia, 2021). Furthermore, the adoption of Instagram among top brands is also continuously increasing. For instance, Starbucks has over 17 million Instagram followers. Starbucks’ Instagram provides various brand-related information, such as news, entertainment, and activities, by means of photos, videos and text and enables their followers to interact and communicate with others about customer experience and to consume products on its official account pages. Compared with traditional textual postings, photos uploaded to social media tend to be more emotional and positive (Kaiser et al., 2020). Instagram’s nature as a visual social networking site (SNS) in which creativity is applied to the photos or videos that are shared, it has a greater number of interactions between customers and brands than other SNSs do (Casaló et al., 2017). However, few studies have investigated the impact of brand-related posts on customer engagement in the context of Instagram.

Big data generated from social media and smart mobile devices has been regarded as a key to obtain insights into human behavior and been extensively utilized for launching marketing activities (Zhou et al., 2020). An increasing number of brands take the advantage of advanced technology such as artificial intelligence (AI) to facilitate customer engagement towards co-creating personalized experiences by customer-centric data analytics because it can inform the creation of offerings that are most
aligned with the customer’s needs and preferences (Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019; Gupta et al., 2020).

To address competition, social media developers and brand managers need to acquire new knowledge on how to use new forms of social media (such as Instagram) which combine with new-age technologies (such as AI) to retain their customers. Given that limited empirical studies are available to understand customer engagement with brand fan pages on Instagram, this study expects to contribute knowledge to the extant literature by drawing upon the elaboration likelihood model (ELM), for the purpose of identifying and testing the factors that influence customer engagement in the context of Instagram.

The elaboration likelihood model (ELM), as a persuasion theory, explains how information is processed by an individual and influences an individual’s attitude formation and, subsequently, his/her behavior (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). As a result, ELM serves as a useful theoretical lens to classify the motivation into the central and peripheral routes and to further examine their relative importance in affecting individuals’ attitudes towards engagement. Previous studies have applied ELM to investigate the effects of content type (utilitarian vs. hedonic) on individuals’ involvement and intention to subscribe to/promote a company’s SNS. However, little research has provided empirical evidence on how post quality characteristic (AI-driven posts and non-AI-driven posts) and post content type (utilitarian posts and hedonic posts)
can facilitate customer engagement.

**Research Question**

The aim of this study is to address the abovementioned theoretical and practical challenges by examining the following questions: What are the determinants that lead customers to engage in brand fan pages on Instagram? The research hypotheses are proposed as follows: (a) Customers’ motivations toward engaging with brand fan pages on Instagram will be higher when the post quality characteristic is AI-driven posts, compared to when the post quality characteristic is non-AI-driven posts; (b) Utilitarian posts will exhibit higher customer engagement than hedonic posts; (c) There will be an interaction effect of the post quality characteristic and the post content type on customer engagement.

**Research Method**

An experiment with a 2×2 factorial design is used to investigate the impact of post quality characteristic (AI-driven posts and non-AI-driven posts) on customers’ motivations toward engaging with brand fan pages on Instagram. The moderating role of post content type (utilitarian posts and hedonic posts) on the customer engagement is also tested. The experimental design of this study is conducted by a convenience sampling to find volunteer participants, and randomly assigned them to different simulated scenarios. Only people who have experience of liking and/or following at least one brand fan page on Instagram are included as respondents. In addition, brand
fan pages on Instagram which have or do not have derived superior insights on posts from advancements in data and in analytics are included as targets.

**Expected Contribution**

There is currently a proliferation of the use of new forms of social media (e.g., Instagram) and new-age technologies (e.g., artificial intelligence, AI) by brands to boost returns on the investments made in launching online brand communities on social media and to develop a better understanding of customer insights about their own motivations for co-creation with brand fan pages on social media, and the resulting benefits have become an important issue for academics and practitioners. The main purpose of this study is to explore the effect of post quality characteristic (AI-driven posts vs. non-AI-driven posts) and post content type (utilitarian posts vs. hedonic posts) on customers’ motivations toward engaging with brand fan pages on Instagram by conducting an experiment with a 2×2 factorial design. This study expects to contribute to the theories by first drawing upon the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) in the context of customer engagement on Instagram. This study also expects to contribute to the practice by guiding brand and social media managers on how to benefit from taking advantage of social media and new-age technologies to facilitate consumer engagement towards co-creating personalized experiences.
References

References are available upon request.
EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADS ON NEW PRODUCT PERCEPTION AND BEHAVIORAL INTENTION

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Keywords: Product introduction; social media advertisements; mobile app; download intention; theory of planned behavior

Description: This research helped determine the effects of social media ads for a new mobile app, as well as willingness and intention to download the app, with results showing consumers responded to messages about saving money and time, and ease of use, and that attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms were the drivers of behavioral intention.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

With money and resources being poured into social media marketing, the challenge for marketers is determining how to create social media ads that are effective. Unfortunately, there is a paucity of studies on the consumer’s perception of new product advertisements on social media. To address this gap, and to respond to the calls for more research on consumer engagement in social networking sites (Brodie et al., 2014; Dessart, 2017; Hollebeek et al., 2016; Tran et al., 2020), the objective of this research was to determine market viability of a new product using such ads. Research questions included: What type of social media ad would generate the most consumer responses? How likely would consumers be to respond to a new product introduction via social media advertisements? Would consumers be willing to download a new mobile app based on viewing social media ads? And, what marketing messages motivate consumers to download a new mobile app?
Method and Data

A total of 894 people participated in the research in two studies that employed both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Study 1 was exploratory research designed to acquire insight about what challenges consumers experience when cooking. A 38-item survey was leveraged, with data collected nationwide using snowball sampling (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981) in an online questionnaire distributed via email and social network sites. A total of 504 individuals completed the survey. Participants were told about a new product to be introduced that was a mobile phone application designed to assist people with their grocery shopping and at-home food inventory as it related to recipes they wanted to make. Scales measured awareness of personal food supply, buying tendencies, budget management, recipe variety seeking, and a desire to replenish food. Open-ended questions captured qualitative data. In Study 2, three social media advertisements were created based on the results of Study 1. A 61-item online survey collected data via MTurk with 390 valid responses. Dependent variables were willingness to download the app, intention to download now, and intention to download in the future. Independent variables include the three constructs from the theory of planned behavior, while attitude toward the product was a moderator.

Summary of Findings

Correlation analysis was used in Study 1, finding significance between how aware people are of their existing food supply and: buying tendency (-.351, p-value < .000); recipe variety seeking (.215, p < .000); and the desire to replenish food (-.096, p = .031). There were also significant correlations between buying tendencies when shopping and the desire to replenish (.180, p < .000), and between budgeting and people seeking recipe variety (.141, p = .001). In Study 2, the
TPB model was significant on willingness to download the app ($R^2 = .665; F(3,386) = 254.96; p < .000$), with all three independent variables showing significance: attitude toward the behavior ($p < .000$); subjective norms ($p < .000$); perceived behavioral control ($p = .006$). The model improved for the dependent variable related to downloading the app now ($R^2 = .722; F(3,386) = 334.21; p < .000$), but perceived behavioral control was not significant. The model with the dependent variable “intent to download in the future” improved upon that ($R^2 = .739; F(3,389) = 364.41; p < .000$), with attitude toward the behavior ($p < .000$) and subjective norms ($p < .000$) still significant. Further analysis showed attitude toward the product moderated the relationship between attitude toward the behavior and willingness to download ($LLCI = .0587, ULCI = .1417$) and between subjective norms and willingness to download ($LLCI = .0911, ULCI = .1763$). Similar results were found for the other two dependent variables.

**Key Contributions**

This research contributes to three areas important to marketers: (1) digital marketing; (2) social media advertising; and (3) new product introductions. By simulating advertisements on social media, this research tested the ability of digital marketing to affect consumer behavior, finding that specific individual differences play a significant role in the consumer’s intention to adopt a new product. For marketing managers, this research shows what aspects of a consumer are more likely to generate a positive behavioral response, thus allowing them to target their social media ads toward specific audience segments. For those responsible for product introductions, the results shed light on what aspects of consumers might lead to positive responses to certain social media advertisements and associated landing pages. For academics, the research tests the theory of planned behavior in a digital setting and extends the use of the theory by discovering how
attitude toward the product moderates the various relationships contained within the theory. This provides opportunity for researchers to determine exactly how digital advertisements affect product attitudes and behavior. In addition, researchers can leverage the results to examine other individual differences that might moderate the relationships between planned behavior and behavioral intention through advertising stimuli.

References are available upon request.
EXAMINING THE ROLE OF LATENT CONTENT FACTORS IN ONLINE CONSUMER REVIEWS ON RECEIVER OUTCOMES: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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Keywords: Online Consumer Reviews; Argument Quality; Message Valence; OCR Outcomes; Experiments

Description: This research examines the influence of latent content factors (‘argument quality’ and ‘message valence’) in online consumer reviews (OCRs) on three dependent variables: ‘review helpfulness’, ‘review credibility’, and ‘purchase intention’; after controlling for the manifest review factors (review rating, review length, and presence of images) and reviewer factors (demographics, reviewer expertise and reviewer credibility), for an experience product category using a 2*3 between-subjects experiment design.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Past literature has shown that both reviewer and review characteristics influence online review helpfulness (King et al. 2014; Srivastava and Kalro 2018). Majority of existing research on the effects of online consumer reviews (OCRs) on consumer behavior has focused on the effects of manifest review characteristics, which are quantitative in nature and easily measurable, such as volume, numerical rating, and dispersion (Chintagunta et al. 2010); while ignoring the textual or latent content, which are qualitative in nature and implied by the written content [such as writing style, argument quality, review valence, emotional content or readability (Srivastava and Kalro 2019)]. Several previous studies have used manifest variables as a proxy for these latent content factors [like funny votes for customer enjoyment, review length for argument quality and rating for valence (for example, Liu and Park 2015; Racherla and Friske 2012)]. However, recent studies suggest that consumers go beyond star ratings and examine other review characteristics during the decision-making process (e.g., Hu, Koh, and Reddy 2014) and hence, these factors must be studied. Also, most studies in this domain have used secondary or field data and therefore, have been limited to studying only the review helpfulness, and hence do not account for review-receiver characteristics. Thus, this study empirically tests the role of latent content factors, particularly argument quality and message valence (main and interaction effects), on three dependent variables: ‘review helpfulness’, ‘review credibility’, and ‘purchase intention’ after controlling for the review content-related manifest factors and reviewer factors. The key hypotheses are:

**H1:** OCRs that are high on argument quality will be perceived more helpful (H1a)/more credible (H1b)/have greater influence on purchase intention (H1c) than OCRs which are low on argument quality.

**H2a:** Two-sided reviews will be considered more helpful than one-sided reviews.
H2b1: Two-sided reviews will be considered more credible than one-sided reviews.

H2a2: Within one-sided reviews, negative reviews will be considered more helpful than positive reviews.

H2b2: Within one-sided reviews, negative reviews will be considered more credible than positive reviews.

H2c: Within the one-sided review, negative reviews will lead to lower (negative) purchase intentions as compared to positive reviews which will lead to a higher (positive) purchase intention.

H3: The difference in review helpfulness (H3a), credibility (H3b), and consumer purchase intention (H3c) between high and low argument quality review will be higher in case of positive versus negative versus two-sided reviews.

Method and Data

A 2 (Argument Quality: High/Low) * 3 (Valence: Positive/Negative/Neutral) MANCOVA was conducted on three dependent variables (review helpfulness, review credibility, and purchase intention) with the need for cognition (NFC), OCR familiarity, OCR usage and gender of the respondents as the covariates to test the hypotheses. Pre-tests were conducted to validate the product category selection and the purported intent of all the six manipulations (combinations of High-Low Argument Quality and Positive-Negative-Two-sided valence). A total of 306 surveys were administered (via online and offline channels). The study assigned participants randomly to the six manipulations. 281 responses were filled. Out of these 281 responses, 24 responses were discarded due to missing data points and 257 valid responses were used for the analyses.

Summary of Results

When the structural model was tested, the results showed that of the hypothesized relationships between the constructs, only two hypotheses were not significant. The result was significant for argument quality, F (3, 244) = 68.76, p < .0005; Wilk's Λ = 0.542, partial η² = .458;
indicating a difference in the three dependent variables between high and low argument quality reviews. The result was significant for valence, \( F(6, 488) = 16.903, p < .0005; \) Wilk's \( \Lambda = 0.685, \) partial \( \eta^2 = .172; \) indicating a difference in the three dependent variables between positive, negative and two-sided/neutral reviews. The two-way interaction between argument quality (high/low) and valence (positive/negative/neutral) was significant [Pillai’s Trace = 0.268; Wilks’ Lambda = 0.736; Hoteling’s Trace = 0.353 and Roy’s Largest Root = 0.337, \( F(6, 488) = 13.457, p < .0005; \) Wilk's \( \Lambda = 0.736, \) partial \( \eta^2 = .142 \)]. The main effects of the covariates were not significant, and their results were as follows: “gender” (p=0.661), “OCR familiarity” (p=0.532), “OCR usage” (p=0.546), “OCR involvement” (p=0.867), “need for cognition” (p=0.529). Since the omnibus MANCOVA showed significant main effects, a follow-up univariate ANOVA was conducted and the Hypotheses H1a, H1b, H1c, H2a1, H2a2, H2c, H3a, H3c were all significant. Results for the dependent variables are discussed further.

Thus, the results showed that there is a significant main effect of argument quality and valence on the three dependent variables. It proves that manifest cues can be misleading; reviews with same star rating, similar word length, and by the same reviewer are perceived differently depending upon the argument quality of the review. The interaction hypotheses indicate that the valence of an OCR is less important than the quality of the information provided in the review.

**Key Contributions**

This study contributes to the emerging literature on OCRs by addressing several fundamental but largely neglected questions around content-related factors like argument quality and review sidedness and its impact on consumer behavior and decision-making. While some previous studies have explored the influence of argument quality or message valence/sidedness in parts, this study empirically looks at the two factors holistically and in conjunction with one another.
Second, this study validates the conceptualization of the argument quality variable (developed by Srivastava and Kalro 2019) empirically by manipulating the key sub-variables of argument quality (review comprehensiveness, relevance, clarity) and valence in the review text. The results show that the variables extracted from the text are much more effective in explaining the OCR helpfulness. Finally, it explains inconsistencies in the past literature on the role of message valence on OCR outcomes. Langan, Besharat, and Varki (2016) show that online review valence leads to incorrect inferences when viewed in isolation; thus establishing the need to be examined jointly with other factor like valence. The current study extends this understanding and shows that effect of valence can be best explained when studied in conjunction with argument quality, rather than studying in isolation. The results indicate that the valence of an OCR is less important than the argument quality of the information provided in the review.
FAKE NEWS, MISINFORMATION, AND DISINFORMATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA:
THEIR NATURES, IMPACTS AND TREATMENTS

[Report of Initial Findings]
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Keywords: Fake News, Misinformation, Disinformation, Social Media

Description: This initial study reports the natures and characteristics of the three widely and interchangeably used terms on social media—Fake News, Misinformation, Disinformation—based on the results of the systematic review method. The analytic review on the relevant terminologies may set the directions in the discovery of the impacts and treatments of each or all.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Statement of Key Contributions

Although we may agree the enormous harm of fake news diffusion on social media, there is not yet an explicit agreement in defining fake news, misinformation, and/or disinformation. By defining these widely used terms, this study attempts to address various sides of fake news issues on social media, therefore. First, a systematic review of the relevant terms—fake news, misinformation, and disinformation—is conducted to precisely illustrate the natures and characteristics of the terms in the literature. Second, differences and similarities in the impacts of fake news, misinformation, and disinformation are planned to identify. Third, as these terms are analyzed for the nature and impact of each, possible treatments to each and/or all of fake news, misinformation, and disinformation on social media will be discussed. These treatments may
include practices and policies to prevent the spread of untrue and/or harmful information on social media as well as the devices and remedies to stop fake news diffusion and/or correct wrong information on social media. This paper is an early report of the first part findings.

**Research Objective**

According to Vargo, Guo, and Amazeen (2018), there was a 1,100% increase in the number of traceable online fabricated news stories, from approximately 500 to over 6,000 stories per month between 2014 and 2016. Social media have been criticized for facilitating the spread of misinformation on a range of products and brands (Chen & Cheng, 2020; de Regt, Montecchi, & Ferguson, 2020), political (Lewandowsky, Ecker, & Cook, 2017) as well as health topics (Broniatowski, et al., 2018). Although we may agree the enormous harm of misinformation diffusion, there is not yet a clear agreement in defining fake news or misinformation. Thus, using the term fake news might bring an issue of definitional rigor, as Wang, et al. (2019) emphasized. Therefore, this first part study has a clear objective. An analytic review on terminologies related to misinformation will be conducted in order to identify common characteristics of each term. This first step of defining fake news and/or misinformation may help scholars, practitioners, and citizens distinguish legitimate information from harmful and/or untrue messages, and thus prevent us from engaging in destructive conversations.

**Method and Data**

According to Ahn and Kang’s (2018) study, “a systematic review attempts to gather all available empirical research by using clearly defined, systematic methods to obtain answers to a specific question (p. 104).” The authors also emphasized that the common aim of systematic reviews of previous studies on the similar topics and meta-analyses of comparing and combining their results is to help better extract accurate, good quality data from the flood of data being produced.
Furthermore, a well-executed systematic review method provides a reliable knowledge base of a topic and enables future research avenues to be generated and ascertained, as subjectivity and bias can be mitigated (Christofi, Leonidou, & Vrontis, 2017; Liu, et al., 2021). Indeed, the conduct of a systematic review depends heavily on the scope and quality of included studies. In order to achieve a desirable systematic review and avoid incorrect outcomes being derived from the careless review, each of the steps to select articles is carefully conducted.

**Article Search Strategy:** I used scholarly search engines specifically focused on the related field of the studies. I used two representative databases—EBSCO database: Communication & Mass Media Complete and ProQuest Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts (LLBA), as these are recommended by the University Library Official website for the field of Communication Studies. I searched for the records published between January 2000 and December 2020. The keywords included “misinformation” or “fake news” or “disinformation” or “rumor” or “alternative fact” or “false” or “mislead” or “fabricated” or “manipulated.” This search yielded a significant number of records on each of the academic search sites mentioned—106 and 341 articles respectfully. For an initial attempt, I decided to review the articles among the 106 articles screened in at the EBSCO database: Communication & Mass Media to collect descriptions and definitions of misinformation and/or fake news. Next, I identified and removed duplicates. The initial list was reduced once again upon screening titles, abstract, and keywords manually. Lastly, articles that are not related to communication, not written in English, and not on human subjects have been excluded.

**Summary of Findings**

Among 26 academic publications reviewed, descriptions of fake news appeared in 15 articles, misinformation appeared in eight articles, disinformation appeared in four articles, and rumors
and fabricated news appeared in two articles. In addition, mal-information and manipulated news were mentioned once. Some common characteristics have merged for “Fake News” across the selected articles. Most of the definitions and descriptions of fake news include four components: 1) intentionally fabricated or modified, 2) factually incorrect, 3) to deceive and/or misinform, and 4) in a news-like format. This first component, intentionally fabricated or modified, is what separates fake news from misreported news. The second component, factually incorrect, is about the veracity of information, and it connects to the third component, to deceive and/or misinform. It explains the intent and/or goal of fake news diffusion—to deceive and/or misinform an individual or the public. Lastly, fake news is in a format of news, and thus looks legitimate. This last characteristic of fake news separates it from misinformation, disinformation, and rumor as its format is different from those of them. “Misinformation” has been used more frequently than other relevant terms across the articles on the list only except fake news. The common characteristics of misinformation have merged into two components: 1) nonfactual, incorrect information and 2) not intend to deceive. Although some descriptions of misinformation include deceptive and misleading elements, overall, misinformation does not include an intention to actively deceive an individual and/or mass audience. This separates misinformation from disinformation. “Disinformation” has been compared to misinformation across the articles. The characteristics of disinformation are: 1) false information, 2) intend to deceive, and 3) potentially cause harm. The next step of this research is that the impacts of each—fake news, misinformation, disinformation, and rumor—to people and society will be explored, and prescriptive and preventive treatments for each will be developed.

References are available upon request.
INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK FOR RECOMMENDATION SYSTEM PARTICIPATION AND OUTCOMES

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Keywords: Recommendation systems, active data, passive data, user satisfaction, privacy/convenience orientation

ABSTRACT

Recommendation systems (RSs) are pervasive yet face user concerns and regulatory threats due to their reliance on passively collected data (e.g., previous views, purchases, or ratings). Furthermore, while RSs have improved over time, many remain relatively ineffective for users who are new to the system or whose preferences or purchase intentions have recently changed. Many are also less effective in recommending content that is new to a system or infrequently accessed even if it is an excellent fit for a particular user. We argue that the quality of recommendations and user satisfaction with RSs can be improved by considering the type of data used to generate recommendations and the characteristics of users. To do that, we introduce an integrated framework for recommendation system participation and outcomes (ReSPO). The framework identifies circumstances in which actively collected data (e.g., survey data), provided explicitly to generate recommendations, is likely to improve recommendation quality or satisfaction with the recommendation process compared to passively collected data. The framework also explains how users’ product involvement and privacy/convenience orientation may influence their willingness to provide data in different situations, their satisfaction with the recommendation process, and recommendation quality.
INTRODUCTION

Many major organizations, including Netflix, Amazon, Google, and others, rely heavily on RSs (Smith & Linden, 2017). These systems help users choose the most relevant content without having to navigate an unmanageable number of options (Iacobucci et al., 2000). However, there has been user and regulatory backlash about the amount of data used by such systems and the lack of user control over data. Furthermore, despite many improvements in RSs over the years, limitations remain relating to things such as generating recommendations for new users, recommending content that is new to the RS, and the time it takes for RSs to detect changes in user habits and preferences (Bobadilla et al., 2013).

Researchers across disciplines have explored different aspects of RSs. For instance, computer science studies often concentrate on improving algorithms and RS processes (Lu et al., 2015). Information systems studies investigate how individual factors (e.g., trust or familiarity) impact on RSs (Xiao and Benbasat 2007) and the data used for generating recommendations (Cao & Li, 2007). Marketing studies propose models to improve performance (Chung and Rao 2012) and explore the link between personalized recommendations and consumer behaviours (Häubl & Trifts, 2000).

We draw on this full range of literature to introduce an integrated conceptual framework for recommendation system participation and outcomes (ReSPO). ReSPO explains how privacy/convenience orientation and product involvement may influence users’ willingness to provide data for use in RSs and moderate the influence of data type on both recommendation quality and user satisfaction with the recommendation process. We also propose how the data types used to generate recommendations may influence both recommendation quality and user satisfaction with the recommendation process.

At a higher level, we demonstrate the value of integrating ideas from topics with a long history in the marketing literature (personalization, satisfaction, involvement, privacy) with research on RSs to address some of the previously identified limitations of such systems. This integration may provide insights that enable improvement in the quality of recommendations as well as user satisfaction with
RSs. We also contribute to an explanation of the apparent paradox of users continuing to use RSs despite expressing concern about the amount of personal data used to power such systems and whether RSs may be manipulating users without their knowledge or explicit consent.

The following section of the paper introduces the constructs that make up the ReSPO framework, shown in Figure 1, and explains the rationale for the proposed links among the constructs. This is followed by a discussion of the framework’s theoretical and practical implications.

CONSTRUCTS

Recommendation Quality

The essential purpose of RSs is to provide ‘good’ recommendations. In the RESPO framework, recommendation quality refers to the percentage of ‘good’ recommendations generated by a given system. The operationalization of ‘good’ varies according to the nature of the system. For example, a ‘good’ recommendation may be operationalized as clicking on a recommended link, listening to a recommended song, viewing a recommended video, or buying a recommended product (Liang, Lai, and Ku 2006).

Satisfaction with the recommendation process

In the ReSPO framework, satisfaction with the recommendation process represents users’ subjective perception of the overall process used to generate recommendations. Satisfaction has a long history in marketing, and is often conceptualized based on how outcomes are perceived relative to expectations (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993).

Recommendation quality is likely to influence users’ satisfaction with the recommendation process; however, it is unlikely to be the only driver of satisfaction with the recommendation process. For example, a commonly expressed concern is people receiving a recommendation that is so accurate they believe ‘someone’ must be listening to their phone calls. In situations like that, concern over how the information is perceived to have been acquired tends to outweigh the benefits of the quality of the recommendation (Gilbert, 2019).
Data source

Passively collected data

The RSs that are most familiar to users rely primarily on data collected in the background (passively) without any active effort from the user. This data is often provided for purposes such as serving a Web page or completing a transaction. Users may not know that data is being captured (Poynter et al., 2014), let alone being used to generate recommendations. Commonly used forms of passively collected data include previous purchases and content that users have previously listened to or watched (Gomez-Uribe & Hunt, 2015). Depending on the platform and its recommendation algorithms, passively collected data may also relate to things that friends of the user, or others who are behaviorally similar, have bought, listened to, watched, etc. (Wang, Zhang, and Lu, 2016).

The fact that passively collected data accumulates in the background without any user involvement is convenient for users. Furthermore, in some situations inferences based on what users (or their friends, or others like them) have previously watched, listened to, or viewed may be more accurate than recommendations generated with explicitly stated preferences (Najafabadi et al., 2017).

In other situations, passively collected data may not accurately predict future behavior. For instance, data collected passively prior to COVID-19 may not have generated accurate recommendations for what people wanted to buy, listen to, or watch during lockdown restrictions (Shaw, 2020). The same may be true of recommendations made immediately following other significant changes in circumstances, such as changes in jobs, homes, or relationships.

A significant challenge for generating recommendations using passively collected data is the cold-start problem. That occurs when a new user or new content enters the system. For example, when a user starts buying from a new retailer or subscribing to a new streaming service, the RS can only make general recommendations until enough data is accumulated about the individual to make specific recommendations (Son, 2016). Similarly, when new content becomes available within RSs, there is no passively collected data about who has accessed it previously. The new content may not be recommended until such data becomes available (Yuan et al., 2016). This phenomenon creates a
particular problem for ‘long-tail’ items, which may never accumulate enough data about which users access it to be recommended frequently (Anderson, 2008).

**Actively collected data**

Of course, making recommendations based on passively collected data is not the only option. Marketers have been collecting data through mechanisms such as surveys, focus groups, and interviews for nearly a century. The notable thing about those mechanisms is that the subject of the data is aware they are supplying it at the time they do so because it requires active participation on their part to complete a questionnaire, contribute to a focus group, or respond to an interviewer.

Actively collected data about things such as attitudes, preferences, and values can be used to inform recommendations (Kahle et al., 1986; Madden et al., 1992). Historically, this type of data has generally been used to make recommendations at the segment level rather than the individual level (Kamakura & Mazzon, 2002); however, there is no reason why it can’t be used to make individual-level recommendations. Focus group and interview data would be challenging to scale for that purpose, but survey data is not. Using emerging technologies such as AI-driven voice assistants (Dellaert et al., 2020) is likely to make active data collection at scale even easier.

Using actively collected data to make recommendations enables users to “tell” the system about new preferences and future intentions rather than waiting for the system to learn about those changes over time (Cao and Li 2007). This addresses some of the limitations described previously for passively collected data. For example, “telling” the system about preferences eliminates the cold-start problem for both users and content. On the whole, those advantages are significant enough for us to propose that where both sources of data are available, recommendations generated using actively collected data will result in greater recommendation quality.

**Product Involvement**

Using surveys to generate enough actively collected data to make recommendations across the full range of products, services, and content that people consume would be prohibitively time-consuming. In many cases, the incremental quality improvement resulting from using actively
collected data to generate recommendations may not be sufficient to justify the effort. There may also be cases in which users lack the self-knowledge required to express their true preferences or will refrain from supplying them for social desirability reasons. Therefore, it’s useful to consider when using actively collected data can be expected to improve recommendation quality enough to make it worth the effort. Product involvement, traditionally defined as perceived personal relevance (Houston & Rothschild, 1978), provides a useful perspective for doing that.

The more involved a person is with the category of content being recommended (e.g., music, movies, books), the more sophisticated their preferences and ratings within that category are expected to be (Cardozo, 1965) and the more motivated they are likely to be to provide accurate data. Therefore, when recommendations are generated using actively collected data, we expect recommendation quality to be greater for people with high involvement in the category of content being recommended.

By definition, the product category in question is of greater relevance to highly involved users, so those users are likely to have greater expectations of RSs than low-involvement users. However, those expectations may not be met due to limitations in the content available within RSs, the volume and accuracy of source data, and/or the algorithms used to generate recommendations. High-involvement users are expected to have lower satisfaction with the recommendation process than low-involvement users due to those unmet expectations.

It could be argued that those who are more highly involved in a product category may have less need for a RS since they are likely to be familiar with more of the content available within the category and have personal, non-automated, sources of recommendations available to them (e.g., expert reviewers, social media, discussion forums, etc.).

**Privacy/convenience orientation**

Most people want both privacy and convenience, but understand that there is often a tradeoff between the two, as is almost always the case for RSs (Chellappa and Sin 2005). Therefore, it’s important to consider how individual users make that tradeoff. To do that, we introduce a privacy/convenience orientation construct which is intended to reflect whether overall (across
contexts) an individual tends to be equally oriented toward privacy and convenience or to prioritize one over the other, and if so, by a greater or lesser extent. All other things being equal, we expect users who are more oriented toward convenience to be more satisfied with RSs that rely on passively collected data because such systems require no effort from them (Häubl & Trifts, 2000). Conversely, we expect more privacy-oriented users to be more satisfied with RSs based on actively collected data because of their greater transparency, in terms of both the data and the data collection process.

**User willingness to provide data**

Until now, our discussion has assumed the availability of both active and passive data, yet in most countries, even passive data requires a user opt-in or opt-out option (State of California, 2018). Therefore, our framework includes a construct that reflects user willingness to provide data that can serve as an input for generating recommendations. This construct is expected to be influenced by both privacy/convenience orientation and product involvement.

The more privacy-oriented a user is, the more willing they are likely to be to provide actively collected data for generating recommendations because then they can fully control exactly what data is provided. Convenience-oriented users may not perceive that control as being worth the time required to actively provide data to the system, so the more willing they are likely to be to agree to passively-collected data about them being used to generate recommendations (Li and Unger 2012).

We also expect that users will be more likely to provide information in exchange for good recommendations when they are highly involved with the category of content being recommended than when they are not. Higher involvement contexts have been shown to result in greater information-seeking intentions and greater interest in personal recommendations (Knotzer & Madlberger, 2007).

**DISCUSSION**

The above constructs and their relationships are shown in the ReSPO framework in figure 1.

**Theoretical Contributions**
The ReSPO framework delineates two important outcomes upon which recommendation systems may be evaluated: recommendation quality and satisfaction with the recommendation process. It demonstrates that integrating previously separate literature streams can enable a deeper understanding of how the data source may influence both recommendation quality and satisfaction with RSs. Bringing in ideas related to involvement, privacy, and convenience makes it possible to make nuanced predictions about users’ willingness to provide data, recommendation quality, and satisfaction with the recommendation process.

**Practical Contributions**

The conceptual framework also has practical implications for organizations operating RSs.

**Matching data sources to users:**

ReSPO can help those managing RSs to match data sources to users based on user product involvement and privacy/convenience orientation. Recommendations generated using passively collected data may not be precise enough to satisfy the requirements of high involvement users. Such users may also be more willing to provide actively collected data for use as an input into RSs because the improvement in recommendation quality would be worth it for them. In contrast, lower involvement users probably only need a “good enough” recommendation rather than the best possible recommendation, so they may be willing to live with lower recommendation quality to gain the convenience of not having put in the effort to provide data. Therefore, an organization could offer recommendations to all users based on passively collected data but then offer those who are interested the option to opt into supplementing or replacing that with actively collected data to improve recommendation quality. Highly involved users may then choose to supplement to get better quality recommendations, and privacy-oriented users may opt for no recommendations at all or for recommendations based on only actively collected data so as to have greater control over their data.

**Addressing cold-start and dynamic preference problems**

While the current backlash against big tech is largely a reaction against the amount of data held by the largest platforms, it masks the fact that in many situations recommendation quality is
constrained by data limitations. Passively collected data can work well for generating recommendations when a user has a long history of purchases and their preferences haven’t changed, but when a new user or item enters the system or when a user’s preferences have changed very recently RSs do not have the data required to generate good recommendations. In situations where those circumstances are common, organizations operating RSs can use actively collected data about users’ current interests and preferences to address those problems. Such data can also be used to identify those most likely to be interested in a new product even in the absence of any data about who has purchased, viewed, or rated that product previously.

**Future Research**

When discussing data sources in this paper, we have mainly focussed on differences between actively and passively collected data; however, there is extensive variety within each of those broad categories of data. For example, actively collected data could include everything from personality traits to values to directly expressed product preferences. Passively collected data could include anything from comments on social media to app or Web history to credit card records. Variation in those inputs could influence both recommendation quality and satisfaction with the recommendation process. Further research could explore how recommendation quality and satisfaction with the recommendation process are influenced by the exact type(s) of active and passive data (including the quality of that data) used to generate recommendations and what happens when active and passive data are used in combination. It could also investigate variation in willingness to provide different forms of active and passive data and whether that is influenced by product involvement or privacy/convenience orientation.
Figure 1: Integrated Framework for recommendation system participation and outcomes

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Is disclosure good for online ad effectiveness? The crowd safety effect of collective-based transparency

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Description: Conducting an online experiment (N = 323), this study found that the negative effect of advertising disclosure can be attenuated by displaying ad transparency statements. We also discover an online crowd safety effect carried by collective-based transparency statements.

Keywords: Advertising Disclosure, Ad Transparency, Ad Effectiveness, Individual, Collective

Research Question

As massive consumer data are being collected to produce targeted advertisements, rising concerns about privacy infringement and information misuse are expected to damage ad effectiveness. Conducting an online experiment (N = 323), this study investigates the joint effects of advertising disclosure and ad generation transparency on online ad effectiveness. We aim to test the online crowd safety effect carried by collective- (vs. individual-) based transparency statements on mitigating the negative impact of ad disclosure and enhancing the effectiveness of online targeted advertisements. We propose the following research questions (along with hypotheses):
**R1:** Does advertising disclosure (vs. nondisclosure) negatively influence the effectiveness of online targeted advertisements?

**R2:** Do ad generation statements mitigate the negative influence of advertising disclosure on the effectiveness of online targeted advertisements?

**R3:** What are the differences between collective-based and individual-based ad generation statements in affecting the effectiveness of online targeted advertisements?

**Method and Data**

A two by three (advertising disclosure: disclosure vs. nondisclosure; ad generation transparency statement: baseline vs. individual based vs. collective based) between-subjects online experiment was conducted to examine (1) the main effects of advertising disclosure and ad generation transparency statements on ad effectiveness and (2) the moderating effects of individual-based and collective-based ad generation transparency statements on the relationship between advertising disclosure and ad effectiveness. We distributed the survey link through social media platforms in a major South Korea university and 400 students participated. After excluding nonresponses and cases with missing data, we recorded a total of 323 (80.75%) valid responses.

Participants provided their demographic information at the beginning of the experimental survey. They were then asked to complete a filler task that contained two parts. The purpose of the filler task was to simulate an online context of personal data collection. After the completion of this filler task, each of them read manipulated instructions followed by an image of a simulated webpage featuring the interior and exterior designs of a hotel and a simulated booking button. After reading the information on this page, participants responded to questions regarding the manipulation check and ad effectiveness.

**Summary and Findings**
The results revealed that advertising disclosure significantly decreased ad effectiveness only in the baseline condition when ad transparency information was not displayed. Individual-based transparency directly reduces the online ad effectiveness whereas collective-based transparency has no significant direct effect on ad effectiveness. Both individual and collective-based ad generation transparency statements attenuate the negative direct effect of ad advertising disclosure. We also found that collective-based statements are a more effective transparency intervention against advertising disclosure as the results showed that collective-based statements produced the highest ad effectiveness compared with individual-based statement and no statement (baseline) conditions. But no significant differences in ad effectiveness were observed between the individual-based statement and baseline conditions.

We plotted the interaction effects of ad generation transparency on ad effectiveness, which illustrates that a crossover interaction exists between collective-based transparency and ad disclosure, such that collective-based transparency dramatically reverses the negative impacts of ad disclosure on both measures of ad effectiveness in a positive direction.

**Key Contributions**

Built upon the PKM and procedural fairness theory, our findings offer insights into the functional boundary of ad disclosure in shaping consumers’ coping strategies against persuasion attempts by advertisers. While research has reported negative impacts of ad disclosure on the effectiveness of advertisements, our results offer a nuanced understanding of consumers’ reactions after being exposed to ad disclosure. More important, our research extends the stream of research on ad transparency by investigating its understudied social dimension, and distinguishes the divergent impacts of two types of transparency statements, i.e., either individually oriented or collectively oriented, in conveying the data sources for ad generation. Our findings contribute to the understanding of how to achieve safety perceptions in a virtual crowd through transparency messages delivered by advertisers, thus providing
implications for advertising research on shaping consumers’ cognitive heuristics in the digital space.

Our findings offer implications for online marketers and advertisers. Given the mandated disclosure of clear advertisement identification, our results suggest that a proper ad transparency statement can counterbalance the perceived risks of persuasion tactics and gain consumer trust. As individual-based ad generation statements may directly harm consumers’ interest in clicking on an ad, we recommend that advertisers adopt a collective-focused approach to informing consumers that the targeted ads they see were generated based on a massive dataset of similar consumers, which ensures anonymity and data security. Our research also sheds light on policy making. Since collective-based ad generation statements do not harm, but significantly elevate consumers’ interest in the recognized advertising content, we recommend that regulators should actively help advertisers understand and implement this practice to facilitate an ethical online advertising environment.
IT’S A MAN’S WORLD? MALE DOMINANCE OF A PRODUCT’S ONLINE COMMUNITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR REVIEW VOLUME, REVIEW VALENCE AND REVIEW DIVERSITY

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KEYWORDS

Diversity; Male Dominance; Masculinity; Online Community; Online Reviews

DESCRIPTION

Using 8.8 million+ online customer reviews generated over a 25-year time period in the beer industry, the implications of male dominance on customer review contributions to the online community are theoretically and empirically investigated.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Does male dominance deter female contributions in an online community context? Does it influence the behavior among male community members as well? If so, what are the implications for the organizations involved (the firms owning the brands / products; the firm hosting the online community platform)? Is the amount and the nature of online review content produced impacted?

Method and Data

Utilizing a large dataset (over 8.8 million online reviews from community participants throughout the world over a 25-year period) in the beer industry, these questions are empirically investigated. This product category is found to be highly male dominant, on average, but there is significant variation across products to enable degrees of male dominance to be empirically examined. Three empirical models are estimated, all of which utilize a Fixed Effects panel regression technique. Fixed Effects for unique products are included to account for relevant heterogeneity that may be associated with product specific idiosyncrasies. Year and month effects are also estimated but not reported to conserve manuscript space. Model 1 predicts Review Volume outcomes. The dependent variable in Model 2 is Review Valence. Lastly, Review Diversity is the outcome variable of interest in Model 3.

Summary of Findings

Both the volume of reviews and the average product ratings produced are lowered in cases where male dominance is high. This naturally leads to the conclusion that male dominance may have a negative impact on market performance outcomes for products and brands. The diversity of consumer reviews is also lowered, leading to less informational value for the broader consumer
base to utilize.

**Key Contributions**

This paper concludes that male dominance of an online community can deter contributions from female reviewers. Findings serve to support longstanding theory on male dominance effects, while extending them to the online community context where it is not entirely obvious that gender may play a salient and relevant role. An additional extension is offered by the current study in showing that relative rates of male dominance across products serve to impact the rate of female deterrence. Our results imply that efforts to reduce male dominance without eliminating it altogether can materially impact market outcomes as a result. A larger implication of this research is that the deterrence of female voices in the online community is not just ethically objectionable, but also stands to negatively impact category performance and the products / brands within it. As fewer products receive reviews because female reviewers are deterred, there is less opportunity for word-of-mouth volume effects to drive up demand in the category. Producer firms may have difficulty fully expanding their market potential. Third-party review sites and online communities are also prone to suffer lower traffic volumes, damaging their own market viability.
LESS TALKING, MORE EMPATHY:
HOW TO USE EMOJIS TO HELP PEOPLE FEEL GOOD

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Keywords: texting, emoji, emoji in therapy, text therapy, consumer wellness, mental health

Description

In two studies, the authors show that in the context of text therapy, using emojis with concise messages (vs. long messages) lead to greater clients’ overall satisfaction, higher willingness to pay, and increased positive word of mouth.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

The use of emojis has emerged in recent years in all sorts of online communications as they are perceived to be appealing and meaningful (Rodrigues et al., 2017). Extant research has demonstrated the benefits of using emojis such as influencing consumers’ affective states, increasing purchase intent, and facilitating good brand relationship (Kang et al., 2013; Li et al., 2019, Das & Hagtvedt, 2016; Hill, 2016). The current project examines the effect of using emojis in the context of “text therapy”. Text therapy is a new form of counselling that allows clients to text with a therapist in an affordable and convenient way (e.g. 7 Cups, BetterHelp, Talkspace). It’s quite common for the text therapists to use emojis. We investigate how the use of emojis will affect the clients’ overall counselling experience and aim to provide recommendations for text therapists to better serve their clients.

We propose that using emojis in text therapy would generate positive client experience only when the use of emojis is combined with concise texts. First, we argue that a therapist who uses emojis in his/her communication with clients will be perceived as empathetic. Empathy is an integral component of counselling and employing empathy enhances the therapist-client relationships (McLeod 1999; Pope and Kline, 1999). Qiu et al. (2016) demonstrated that the use of emojis in a message led to a higher level of perceived empathy. Therefore, when therapists use emojis, clients may perceive them to be more empathetic, which will positively influence their overall counselling experience. We further argue that the benefits of using emojis in text therapy only happen when the communication message from the therapist is concise. Previous research demonstrated that therapists’ empathy and good listening skills lead to positive therapy outcomes (Elliott et al., 2004), and listening to clients’ distress helps ease their pain. Therefore, clients would prefer therapists who listen more, talk less, and always put the focus on their clients. That is why we argue that when therapists use emojis with concise texts (vs. long texts), it will have a better effect on clients’ counselling experience.

Method and Data

We have conducted two studies to test our hypotheses. In Study 1, one hundred and eleven undergraduate students (mean age = 20.8) were asked to imagine that they were talking to a therapist using a text therapy platform for the anxiety they were experiencing. We showed them a screen displaying a text conversation between them and the therapist and subsequently asked about their experience. We had three conditions with the first one demonstrating long texts from therapist, the second one using emojis along with the long texts, and the third one having emojis with concise texts. The results showed that compared to participants in the second condition, participants in the third condition were more satisfied with their counselling experience (p < .05), more willing to talk again with the therapist (p < .01), more satisfied with the counselling platform (p < .05), more willing to continue text therapy in the future (p < .01),
and more likely to recommend the therapist to others (p < .1). These findings suggested that the use of emojis led to more positive client experience when it was combined with concise texts. The difference between the first and the second conditions was not significant, suggesting that simply adding emojis to long texts was not as effective as using emojis with concise texts.

In Study 2 (MTurk, N = 247, mean age 41.2), we used a similar design as in Study 1 except for adding a fourth condition that had concise texts without emojis. First, replicating study 1, participants in condition three were willing to pay more (p < .05), more likely to recommend the counselling platform (p < .1), and more likely to continue text therapy (p < .1) compared to participants in condition two. Similarly, participants in condition one were willing to pay more (p < .01), more likely to recommend the counselling platform (p < .05), and more likely to continue text therapy (p < .01) compared to participants in condition two. There was no significant difference between conditions one and three which suggested that the older population recruited through Mturk might prefer concise text messages with emojis equally as traditional long messages without emojis. Finally, participants in condition three were more willing to talk again with the therapist (p < .05), willing to pay more (p < .01), more likely to recommend the therapist (p < .1) and the counselling platform (p < .1), and perceived the therapist to be more empathetic (p < .1) compared to the participants in condition four. This indicated that shorter texts only did not work as effectively as shorter texts plus emojis in enhancing client experience. Also, the effects on willingness to talk again with the therapist, likeliness of recommending the therapist and the counselling platform more were mediated by the participants’ perceived empathy displayed by the therapist (95% CIs did not include zero). Overall, we found that condition three has better effects than both conditions two and four, suggesting that either the use of emojis or the concise texts alone does not improve counselling experience, and only by combining both factors could we enhance client experience.

Summary of Findings

In summary, we found that effects of using emojis are not always positive. Adding emojis to long texts might even have negative impacts. However, if we combine the use of emojis with concise texts we get a positive impact. This effect might be caused by the emoji making the therapists perceived to be more empathetic. It’s also possible that clients want their therapist to be a good listener with empathy, so shorter texts with emojis give them the impression that the therapist is empathetic and willing to listen. In the future, we want to further explore both mediation and other moderating processes involved in our effects.

Theory and Contribution

We believe this study will be a unique and essential addition to the body of both mental wellness literature and the use of emojis in literature. Additionally, it will also have important practical implications for businesses. A lot more people are using text therapy now, more than ever. Because since the onset of the pandemic, mental health has become more crucial and most people cannot physically meet their therapists. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, for the first-
time, downloads of the top 20 mental wellness apps (especially, text therapy apps like BetterHelp and Talkspace) in the U.S. hit 4 million in April. That’s up 29 percent from 3.1 million in January. As the mental wellness industry is growing rapidly, we believe, this research will help counselors and text therapy platforms provide their customers with better counseling experience.

REFERENCES


LET'S GET DIGITAL: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF INFLUENCERS ON DIGITAL WELLNESS

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Keywords: social media influencers, digital wellness, social comparison theory, digital marketing

Description: This study explores the gap in our knowledge on how consumers’ relationships with technology and with social media influencers impact their digital wellness.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

With the rapid advancement of technology, digital marketing has significantly impacted how consumers and brands communicate with each other. Consumers are increasingly spending their time on social media and interacting with social media influencers. At the same time, consumers are concerned about their digital wellness and overall well-being. Digital wellness is defined as the optimal state of well-being a consumer can achieve when using technology. Previous research has focused on the effectiveness of influencer marketing and what makes influencers persuasive. The impact of influencer marketing on consumers’ digital wellness is underexplored. Thus, we seek to fill this gap with an exploratory, qualitative study that provides insights into the impact of influencer marketing on consumers’ perceptions of digital wellness. Grounded in social comparison theory, our findings reveal several benefits and consequences of influencer marketing on digital wellness.

Research Questions

Digital marketing has significantly changed how brands communicate with consumers. Today consumers live in a hyperconnected world (Swaminathan et al., 2020) where different types of technology like smartphones overwhelmingly occupy consumers hands. As such, concerns about technology and the impacts it has on consumers’ mental health and well-being are increasing, termed digital wellness. Digital wellness is defined as “the optimum state of health and well-being that each individual using technology is capable of achieving” (Royal et al., 2017, p. 103). As consumers are spending more and more time online, brands are connecting with consumers through social media influencers. In fact, at least 76% of Gen Z consumers follow an influencer on their social media (Bump, 2021). Previous research on social media influencers has primarily focused on the effectiveness of brands using influencers and what makes the influencer influential with consumers. However, little research has investigated the benefits and consequences of consumers using social media influencers.

Thus, we seek to fill this gap at the intersection of digital wellness and social media influencers by answering our research questions: (1) how does consumers’ use of technology impact their digital wellness, and (2) how does following social media influencers impact consumers’ digital wellness?

Method and Data

We use an inductive method guided by semi-structured interviews with consumers using the lens of social comparison theory to investigate these research questions. Informants were asked the grand tour question, “Tell me about your relationship with technology” and then were asked several questions regarding how technology impacts various aspects of their life from their relationships with others to their overall wellness. Then informants were asked about their relationships with social media and social media influencers and again, how that impacted various aspects of their lives. Interviews were concluded with questions specific to digital wellness such as what digital wellness means to them. Interviews conducted lasted ninety minutes on average with three consumers (average age = 25; female = 2) using theoretical sampling (Spiggle, 1994). This resulted in 50 single-spaced pages of data. Copious notes and
memos supplemented the data collection process. Specifically, we use the constant comparative method for analysis in MAXQDA (a qualitative data analysis software; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Summary of Findings

Our early findings provide preliminary insights into how technology and following social media influencers impacts consumers’ digital wellness. The findings reveal both benefits and consequences when consumers interact with technology and social media influencers. Informants overwhelmingly discussed the connections they can create with their digital technology from friends and family to social media influencers and even career opportunities. This benefit centered around the information and inspiration informants found on their social media accounts. Instead of hearing a message from a brand, consumers can search hashtags on social media platforms and get reviews from other consumers. In one extraordinary case, an informant found an influencer who helped her diagnose a chronic illness she had been suffering from.

On the other hand, influencers could negatively impact consumers digital wellness. Informants discussed how often they feel overwhelmed by the number of notifications they receive on their smartphones in general, but especially from their social media. This overwhelmed feeling stemmed from a sense of control informants had. Informants who had control over their technology would not set limits, but those who felt the impulse of picking up their phone to go on social media experienced a decline in their digital wellness.

Key Contributions

Specifically, our study extends the gap in our knowledge on how consumers’ relationships with technology and with social media influencers impact their digital wellness. Previous research in influencer marketing has focused on the effectiveness of brands partnerships and what makes influencers persuasive. Meanwhile the research on digital wellness in marketing has looked at different dimensions of digital wellness, not yet from the influencer perspective. As such, theoretically, we contribute to the literature on influencer marketing and extend our knowledge of digital wellness in marketing literature. Practically we offer insights for marketing managers and public policymakers. Marketers have an ethical duty to society to understand the negative impact their products or strategies have on consumers, and as such, digital wellness is emerging as an important construct.

References are available upon request.
MEME YOUR BRANDS: THE ROLE OF MEME IN CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT WITH BRANDS

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Keywords: internet memes, perceived humor, social media, consumer engagement

Description: This research empirically tests the humorous nature of internet memes and increased consumer engagement as its downstream consequence.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

As social media becomes a major tool for businesses, brands strive to maintain relationships with consumers using social media platforms. The advent of social media leads to the rise of content marketing, in which the digital content of brands is marketed (Rowley 2008). Noting the critical role of social media in business, we investigate the role of internet memes in consumer engagement with brands. According to a 2020 report in YPulse’s social media behavior survey, about 75% of 13-36-year-olds tend to share memes, with 79% of 13-17-year-olds tending to do the same. Social media is often replete with memes, as is evidenced by the growing number of social media accounts dedicated solely to posting funny memes for their followers. An increasing number of brands use memes to promote their products. However, despite the popular use of memes in social media, little is known about the effectiveness of memes in consumer engagement.

Research Question:
Memes have been classified to belong to humor genre (Tomaž & Walanchalee, 2020) and are largely reliant on humorous punchlines to draw attention (Lee et al., 2019). Memes have been identified as mostly being anecdotes accompanied by a picture (Kostadinovska-Stojchevska & Shalevska, 2018). Even when extant literature has established the humorous nature of memes, the authors do not know of any research that has empirically tested this, so our first hypothesis formally proposes:

H1: Brand posts are perceived to be more humorous when they use memes (vs. no memes).

Internet memes tend to persist in the minds of people (Rabea Hecker & de Jong, 2020), hence providing a unique opportunity to brands for customer engagement. When political memes are posted, they are known to initiate a discussion (Anne Garcia Claire Anne P Luces & Engay, 2018), again highlighting the engagement memes can result in. Taking all these perspectives into account, we formally propose our second hypothesis:

H2: Brands produce higher consumer engagement when memes are present than when they are absent because of the perceived humor associated with the memes.

Method and Data:

Study 1

We collected tweets from Netflix over a month, a total of 201 tweets: 72 memes, 83 images and 46 text posts and recruited 238 Mturkers to rate the perceived humor on each of the posts by indicating their agreement with the statement “The post was funny” on a 7-point Likert scale (Alden, Mukherjee, & Hoyer, 2000). One-way ANOVA on perceived humor with type of post (Meme/Image/Text) was significant, (F (2,198) = 33.06, p< 0.001) with meme being perceived as more humorous than the image post (t = 7.78, p<0.001) and the text post (t = 5.66, p<0.001).

Study 2
We recruited 138 MTurkers for a two-group between-subjects design (Twitter post: memes vs. no-memes). Consumer engagement was recorded by the likelihood of putting a like and retweeting the post ($\alpha = .90$) and perceived humor was measured using the same measure as Study 1. Using Hayes (2017) Model 4, we tested for the mediation effect of perceived humor on brand engagement with familiarity and mood as control variables. The indirect effect excluded zero (Effect = .64, 95% CI = [.2650 to 1.0824]) and the direct effect became marginally significant ($p = 0.06$), suggesting a partial mediation.

**Summary of findings:**

Brands have shown an upward trend when it comes to their expenditure related to social media marketing. According to a Statista report, the amount spent by the brands on social media advertising has increased from USD 15.63 billion in 2016 to USD 48.94 billion in 2021 and is estimated to touch USD 56.85 billion in 2022 (Statista, 2020). This upward trend can be attributed to the unique opportunity of consumer engagement that social media platforms provide. Study 1 empirically tested the humorous nature of memes. Study 2 established the downstream effect of increased consumer engagement due to the humorous nature of the memes. To the best of our knowledge, ours is the first empirical research to establish the causal link between memes and perceived humor with the downstream consequences of consumer engagement.

**Key contributions:**

Our theoretical contributions are in the field of consumer engagement, social media and specifically in the field of internet memes and marketing. Consumer engagement has been identified as “the future of advertising” with a need for an emerging focus on “contextual factors” that can increase the effectiveness of the advertising (Kumar & Gupta, 2016), our
research fits in very well with this corollary. Hence, social media managers could be in the lookout for popular memes that they can effectively use to convey their brand messages.

Previous studies have established how students use memes to indulge in self-deprecating humor which highlights their humorous failures to express their routine struggles, highlighting the use of humor to normalize an otherwise covert topic (Ask & Abidin, 2018). Organizations have been known to include humor for conveying messages that could have potentially harmful content or disinformation (Csordás et al., 2017). The possibility of practicing managers using memes to convey a message that might be otherwise considered taboo or not talked about as much might be an interesting avenue for future research.

**References are available upon request**
Our Relationship with Smart Technology: IoT CRM

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Keywords: Smart Technology, Internet of Things, Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

Description: The impact of Internet of Things on customer relationship management from the customer perspective.

Research Questions

Our main objective through in-depth interviews is to examine how smart technology and the IoT affects the customer’s perception of their relationship with the brand and company. The present research was designed to shed light on customers’ perceptions of the benefits of IoT and how IoT manages their relationships with corporations.

Methods and Data

We conducted in-depth interviews with thirty-two senior business students recruited from the authors’ marketing classes. Interviews began with a set of grand “tour” question about personal backgrounds, what smart devices they own, which ones they use the most and why they use them? The remaining part of interviews primarily focused on the smart devices they
used the most focusing on the respondent’s relationship with the technology and company
and the effect it had on their daily lives. The authors each did a separate analysis of the
transcripts looking for themes that emerged from the data then came together to compare and
agree upon important themes.

**Summary of Findings**

Our results revealed three major benefits from IoT CRM: hands-free voice control of the
physical servicescape, responsive personalized instant knowledge and social benefits. Our
findings also reveal that customer perceived data risk of using IoT varies because of how they
perceive the brand, the benefits and the world.

**Key Contributions**

This study bridges CRM and IoT gap from the customers’ perspective. This study suggests
IoT as a new type customer engagement tool and front-line /algorithm which constantly
engages customers while collecting data from them. Smart devices create and enhance
constant customer interactions 24/7, which leads to different and stronger brand perception.
Those findings further indicated the transformative potential of IoT because of the constant
personalized interactions that keep the relationship top-of-mind. Customers love their virtual
assistants – such as Amazon Echo and Google Home and that can transfer to the brand.
Customers also appreciate that these virtual assistants can learn from their conversations and
behaviors (daily routines) and develop customizable products, service and marketing
communications enchaining their felt sense ease with the customer relationship management
from the brand.
PLATFORM PRICING IN THE PRESENCE OF CROSS-PLATFORM NETWORK EFFECTS

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Keywords: network effects; network externalities; platform pricing strategies

Description: we examine the platform pricing in the presence of cross-platform network effects in the case where two platforms are either owned separately or owned by one company.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Platform businesses are facilitating services spanning a variety of categories, including entertainment (e.g., Netflix, TV channels), food delivery (e.g., Uber Eat, DoorDash), vacation and trips (e.g., Expedia, Uber, Airbnb) and medical services (e.g., Sharecare, Maple). Consumers are inevitably using more than one platform. In many cases, some consumers mentally, or by contract, bundle services from different platforms together. For example, a family entertainment plan may include both Netflix and ESPN channels; some Uber drivers register on both Uber X and Uber Eats. The literature of two-sided platforms defines the users who use more than one platform as multi-homing users or multi-homers. When sharing a significant number of multi-homers, two platforms are connected and influence each other through multi-homers. From this connection, cross-platform network effects arise and have become a strategic concern among business practitioners. However, extant literature has largely ignored cross-platform network effects. In our research, we first define and examine cross-platform network effects, and then investigate how cross-platform network effects affect platform pricing. Specifically, we discuss
platform pricing when two platforms are separately owned and when two platforms are integrated.

**Method and Data**

To clearly demonstrate the formation and impact of cross-platform network effects through common users, we extend Armstrong (2006)’s model to incorporate cross-platform network effects. Specifically, in our model, we have two symmetric platforms, which have single-homing users on both sides of the platforms and share a pool of multi-homing users on one side. Two platforms can either facilitate complementary or substitutive services, which may result in synergies or conflicts to multi-homers. Therefore, multi-homers’ utilities are adjusted accordingly. We then solve for equilibrium prices in two cases: a) when two platforms are separately owned, and b) when two platforms are integrated. When two platforms are separately owned, each platform has its own profit maximization goal. However, when two platforms are integrated, two platforms share the same profit maximization goal.

**Summary of Findings**

We find some interesting and meaningful results. When two platforms are separately owned, cross-platform network effects induce the platforms to reduce charges on both sides. Moreover, platforms further reduce the prices on both sides in the case where the services on the two platforms are complementary than the case with substitutive services. After two platforms are integrated, the impact of service complementarity/substitutivity is side-dependent. Specifically, on the multi-homing side, the relationship between services on platforms has no impact on pricing strategy in the presence of cross-platform network effects. However, on the side with only single-homing users, platforms charge less when two platforms facilitate complementary services than when two platforms facilitate substitutive services. One important
A caveat from our findings is that platforms are willing to sacrifice prices to attract more users on both sides when cross-platform network effects are present.

**Key Contributions**

Despite how important cross-platform network effects are in platform businesses, limited research investigates the impact of cross-platform network effects within marketing. To our best knowledge, we are the first to examine the cross-platform network effects. We contribute to the literature by providing a theoretical framework to systematically understand platform pricing in the presence of cross-platform network effects. Particularly, we disentangle the two levels of cross-platform network effects and examine how cross-platform network effects affect platform pricing through two levels of impacts. We also extend the analysis on platform pricing when two platforms are integrated.

Our research provides significant managerial insights into platform pricing. First, it demonstrates that multi-platform prices are interrelated due to cross-platform network effects. Specifically, it explains why, in the presence of cross-platform network effects, platforms lower prices on both sides and further reduce the prices when two platforms facilitate complementary services. In addition, it shows how platforms can adjust pricing on each side when platforms are integrated. These insights can help platform managers to understand strategic pricing considering cross-platform network effects. Moreover, our research also offers a guideline for managers to understand the underlying impacts through cross-platform network effects and improve their decision making.

References are available upon request.
RETURNS TO SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE ROLE OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

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Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Engagement, Franchising

Description: This study examines the impact of restaurants' social media activities on customer engagement and financial performance.

ABSTRACT

Although firms across the board are investing in social media (SM) marketing, determining the return on social media investments and establishing their association with firm-level outcomes is difficult. In this paper, the authors conduct an empirical study on social media activity data of 8172 McDonalds stores over a 3-year period by collecting 5 million Facebook posts and more than 6 million Google Maps reviews. They try to understand SM engagement from a customer perspective and its effect on sales and examine the moderating role of customer satisfaction. The results show that higher posting volume leads to higher post engagement, which leads to higher sales, and that these two effects are more pronounced when prevailing customer satisfaction is high. We also find that higher posting volume directly leads to higher sales; however, this effect is weakened when customer satisfaction is high.

KEY CONTRIBUTION

Our study contributes to the understanding of social media effects in several ways. First, a major insight that can be drawn from the results relates to the complementary role played by customers’ satisfaction with a store, which is likely to be based on their in-store and product consumption experiences. There is clear indication that customer engagement with a firm on social media will be enhanced if they are satisfied with the firm and its products. If customers are not satisfied, there is less likelihood that they will be involved with the firm’s social media efforts. This means that investments in SM activity will pay off differentially across customers. Overall, improving customer satisfaction at the firm level is a strategy that goes hand-in-hand with any SM activity.

Second, although firms are increasingly investing in SM, they do not have clarity on whether the shift from traditional media to SM is working or not. Our results clearly show that firms benefit from higher levels of SM activity through two pathways. On the one hand, customers start engaging more on SM and a bigger community of brand advocates is fostered. On the other hand, customers start perceiving the interest and concern of the firm in meeting their needs and start giving it a bigger share of their wallet.

Third, we show that customer engagement has a direct impact on store sales. The implication is that a store will need to constantly engage customers on SM, and doing so means continued SM investments. Many firms make a one-time investment and start their activity on SM but do not maintain it, due to which any initial investment stops giving positive returns after
a point. But we show that SM investments lead to engagement which further drives sales, thus justifying these investments in the first place.
INTRODUCTION

Social Media (SM hereafter) has firmly established itself as an irreplaceable tool that firms use for marketing-related communication and marketing strategy (CMO Survey 2020). Firms use SM to build relationships with customers by pursuing two-way dialogue and strengthening one-to-one connections (Gensler et al. 2013). However, some firms are ahead of the curve in adopting SM than others; that is, the amount of investment, labor, skills, time and technology utilized for tying SM efforts with marketing goals varies significantly across firms. Despite this heterogeneity, common goals that underlie most SM activity include generating higher levels of customer engagement and subsequently leveraging that engagement into positive word of mouth and higher sales.

Beyond SM, customers interact with the firm in other ways using different media throughout their relationship journey. These include visiting the firm’s website and evaluating the firm’s messages on non-social media during the discovery phase, visiting the store or interacting with a salesperson during the evaluative phase, making a purchase and experiencing post-sale interactions, engaging in firm-sponsored community programs, and so on. These interactions and experiences influence customers’ satisfaction and potentially their willingness to engage with the firm on social media platforms.

RESEARCH GAP AND QUESTIONS

Much of the early research on customer engagement in the SM space focused on understanding the construct (Wirtz et al., 2013), developing measurement scales for the construct (Hollebeek, Glynn and Brodie 2014), building nomological models that include antecedents and consequences of the construct (Wirtz et al., 2013) and demonstrating the value of SM in strengthening customer-firm relationships (Sood and Pattinson 2012). While most of these
studies use the individual customer as the unit of analysis, a few studies have adopted the firm as the unit of analysis and examined the impact of SM activity of firms on their performance outcomes. For example, Kumar et al. (2016) evaluated how the engagement of a customer (likes) with a firm influenced that customer’s purchase frequency and amount of spending with that firm. On the other hand, very few studies examine the level of engagement with the firm by its customer base and the translation of that engagement into total sales of the firm. We address this gap in the SM literature through this study.

Additionally, SM is one tool in generating engagement with a firm and increasing the firm’s sales. Customers also are exposed to the firm in other ways through their interactions with the firm at different stages of their purchase journey. These interactions and experiences influence their willingness to engage with the firm and buy the firm’s products and services. In a retail context, this will include in-store experiences and exposure and interaction with traditional forms of firm-to-customer communications. Customer response to these experiences is reflected in their level of satisfaction with the firm. Pansari and Kumar (2016) clearly point out that experiences during the customer journey impact customer satisfaction and in turn customer engagement. No study, to date, has investigated how customer satisfaction impacts engagement of customers on SM. We address this gap and propose that satisfaction is likely to strengthen the impact of SM postings of the firm on customer engagement, as well as the impact of engagement on sales.

Studying the impact of SM activity at the firm level, with regards to these two research gaps, is important for three reasons. First, more and more firms are diverting their communication and advertising dollars from traditional media to SM, and research is needed to evaluate whether this diversion is paying off. Second, the association between SM investments
and firm-level outcomes is still obscured, because of which justifying SM investments has become a difficult job for marketers. Third, decision makers need to better understand that customers interact with the firm in both SM and non-SM settings and that their non-SM experiences are likely to impact the effectiveness of their SM activities and investments.

In addressing the two research gaps identified above, we examine the following three research questions at the firm level: First, how does firm-side SM activity (specifically, posting volume) affect customer-side engagement (specifically, post engagement)? Second, how does firm-side SM activity affect sales, both directly and through post engagement? Third, how does the current satisfaction level of customers moderate these effects? The operational model with the directional hypotheses is presented in Figure 1.

**HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

*Posting Volume and Post Engagement:* SM activity of firms can include diverse actions such as blogging, holding online events, creating forums, and publishing contests. However, we focus on the most common type of firm-side SM activity – namely, posting on SM platforms. Like traditional media, SM posts inform customers about the firm’s current product offerings, prices and promotions and thus offer informational value. Customers focus attention on posts of interest and filter content they deem irrelevant to them, thus increasing the personalization potential of SM posts (Di Ganji and Wasko, 2016). In turn, personalization induces customer responses and enables one-to-one relationship with customers. Such interactions can help in reinforcing favorable brand attitudes of the firm’s customers. SM enables firms to not only communicate faster, but also smarter. Finally, SM exposes customers to one another and instills a feeling of community (Naylor, Lamberton and West 2012). Because of the multitude of benefits social content generates for customers, we propose that the more a firm posts on its SM platforms (i.e.,
higher its posting volume), the more the firm’s customers are inclined to engage with those posts through activities such as reactions, likes or comments.

Customers interact with the firm in settings other than SM. Taking a holistic view, these interactions provide not only knowledge and information but also evoke feelings and emotions and thus lead to cognitive evaluations and emotional responses from customers. These evaluations and responses, in turn, influence the degree to which customers are satisfied with the firm (Pansari and Kumar 2016). Because satisfied customers are more committed to the firm, we expect them to show higher levels of engagement with the firm’s postings. Also, because of the network effect, engagement levels improve not only for the satisfied customers, but also for others in their extended network. Conversely, a less satisfied customer is unlikely to be interested in the social content of the firm and unlikely to respond and engage with that content even if they are exposed to them.

H1: (a) Higher posting volume leads to higher post engagement, and (b) this effect is more pronounced when customer satisfaction is high.

Post Engagement and Sales: Higher post engagement implies that customers are reacting to the content positively and are actively participating in the firm’s community by becoming brand advocates. This contributes to higher sales in two ways. First, engagement can be viewed as a psychological state of a consumer that drives his/her loyalty which manifests behaviorally in repeated purchases. Kumar et al. (2016) found that firm generated social content increased the spending level of engaged customers. Second, engaged customers provide word-of-mouth communication to others in their social network. Research has shown that referred customers are more loyal and provide greater value to firms than customers acquired directly by the firm.
Overall, higher post engagement can payoff in direct and indirect ways and increase firm sales (Rishika et al., 2013; Ogilvy and Mather 2011).

Furthermore, for a given level of post engagement, sales will increase by a greater margin for firms that enjoy higher customer satisfaction. The reason is that firms must be engaging in other activities such as superior service or better promotions that supplement the positivity evoked by SM content. Higher satisfaction will also increase the content of the messages shared by customers and thus have greater impact on the SM community. Thus, a higher level of positive word of mouth will be generated and the content that is shared will be of higher relevance and quality, leading to even higher sales.

H2: (a) Higher post engagement leads to higher sales, and (b) this effect is more pronounced when customer satisfaction is high.

When firms are active and demonstrate a high posting volume on their SM platforms, customers filter the posts according to relevance. The filtered information will enhance customer’s knowledge of the product category and the firm’s brands. Higher knowledge implies more positive attitude toward the brand and higher sales. Further, ‘mere exposure’ to posts is likely to create a favorable attitude in customer minds since it signals that the firm is interested in them and cares enough to engage in one-to-one relationship building. This inference is likely to lead to higher sales.

Extant literature on advertising suggests that the effectiveness of advertising is influenced by the motivation of people to process advertising content (Tellis, 2004). Motivation, in turn, may be a function of the level of customer satisfaction. Satisfied (motivated) customers will be more proactive in processing the information contained in social media posts. This will improve their understanding of the value propositions of the firm’s products, its differences with other
offerings and tend to be more frequent and repeat shoppers who may also be willing to pay higher prices.

\[ H3: (a) \text{Higher posting volume leads to higher sales, and (b) this effect is more pronounced when customer satisfaction is high}. \]

**DATA AND METHODOLOGY**

Social media has become an essential means of engaging with customers in the fast-food industry (Gascon et al. 2017). For empirical testing of the hypothesized model, we selected McDonald’s, the world’s largest restaurant chain by revenue and serving over 69 million customers daily in over 100 countries (TMW 2020). The McDonald’s chain comprised of 13,914 stores in the United States, spread across all 50 States, in 2019. Social media platforms are important tools used by the chain and its stores, as evidenced by the fact that it has 80 million followers, posted 352,770 times on Facebook pages and received 191,371 engagements in response to those posts across the country in 2019. However, there is significant variation across stores in the degree to which they use social media platforms.

We created a unique and novel dataset at the store level using several independent sources: Chain Store Guide, the Census database, Google Places API, Foursquare API, and Facebook Graph API. We acquired location and sales data for all McDonald’s stores from *Chain Store Guide*; collected market-level data such as the number of households and the total population from the 2010 *Census data*; and captured customer satisfaction ratings for each store from *Google Places API*. To collect customer ratings for each store, we first collected the *Google Maps* link of each store in the United States, including those stores that have been closed. We downloaded and accumulated all the customer reviews for those stores in the past years using the link to the store. Review data was available for the years 2016 to 2018 since Google updates its
ratings regularly. Using this process, we collected more than six million customer reviews for stores. The next step involved separating the reviews by store, and year. We collected an average of 692 customer reviews per store.

We also collected the Facebook page links of the store locations using the Foursquare API. Out of 13914 stores, 8172 stores operated a Facebook page. Additionally, Foursquare API also revealed that these stores were not active on social media websites other than Facebook. Lastly, we collected post level data from the Facebook pages using the Facebook Graph API. We collected 5.7 million posts, which received 741,930 engagement instances. We measured post volume of store $i$ during year $t$ as the number of posts created by the store on its Facebook page. We measured post engagement with store $i$ during year $t$ as the total number of shares, comments, and reactions received on the Facebook page of the store.

Model Specification. We tested our model with least squares regression and applied fixed effects estimator to control for unobserved heterogeneity. We control for endogeneity by using Gaussian Copulas that directly model the joint distribution of the potentially endogenous regressors and the error term through control function terms (Park and Gupta 2012). With a normally distributed error term, a requirement for identification is that the endogenous regressors are not normally distributed. In our data, Shapiro-Wilk tests of normality for all endogenous regressors (except inter-chain competition) confirm this (all $p < 0.001$). The Gaussian copula for each endogenous variable $X_i$ is: $\text{Copula}_i = \phi^{-1}(H(X_i))$, where $\phi^{-1}$ is the inverse distribution function of the standard normal, and $H(.)$ is the empirical cumulative distribution function of $X$. 

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We present our results in Table 1. Regarding the first set of hypotheses, posting volume has a positive effect on post engagement (Model 1: $\beta = .104$, $p<.01$) and this effect is strengthened by customer satisfaction with the store in the previous time period (Model 2: $\beta = 9.996; p<.01$). Thus, both $H_{1a}$ and $H_{1b}$ are supported. Regarding the second set of hypotheses, post engagement has a positive effect on store sales (Model 3: $\beta = .160; p<.05$) and this effect is strengthened by customer satisfaction in the previous time period (Model 4: $\beta = 52.429; p<.05$). Thus, both $H_{2a}$ and $H_{2b}$ are supported.

Finally, regarding the third set of hypotheses, posting volume has a positive effect on store sales (Model 3: $\beta = .205; p<.001$) and this effect is weakened by customer satisfaction in a previous time period (Model 4: $\beta = -38.858; p<.01$). Thus, while $H_{3a}$ is supported, $H_{3b}$ is not. The last result is counter-intuitive and possibly suggests that social media activity of firms, over and above the indirect effect through customer engagement, faces diminishing direct returns for satisfied customers. This last result requires more investigation in future studies.

These results provide strong support for the proposed theoretical model and contribute to our understanding of social media effects in several ways. First, a major insight that can be drawn from the results relates to the complementary role played by customers’ satisfaction with a store, which is likely to be based on their in-store and product consumption experiences. There is clear indication that customer engagement with a firm on social media will be enhanced if they are satisfied with the firm and its products. If customers are not satisfied, there is less likelihood that they will be involved with the firm’s social media efforts. This means that investments in SM activity will pay off differentially across customers. Overall, improving customer satisfaction at the firm level is a strategy that goes hand-in-hand with any SM activity.
Second, although firms are increasingly investing in SM, they do not have clarity on whether the shift from traditional media to SM is working or not. Our results clearly show that firms benefit from higher levels of SM activity through two pathways. On the one hand, customers start engaging more on SM and a bigger community of brand advocates is fostered. On the other hand, customers start perceiving the interest and concern of the firm in meeting their needs and start giving it a bigger share of their wallet.

Third, we show that customer engagement has a direct impact on store sales. The implication is that a store will need to constantly engage customers on SM, and doing so means continued SM investments. Many firms make a one-time investment and start their activity on SM but do not maintain it, due to which any initial investment stops giving positive returns after a point. But we show that SM investments lead to engagement which further drives sales, thus justifying these investments in the first place.
REFERENCES


FIGURE 1
Operational Model

Customer Satisfaction

Posting Volume → Post Engagement → Store Sales
H1a + H2a + H3b +

H1b +

H3a +

H2b +
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
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<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
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<td>Engagement</td>
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<td>Posting Volume (t)</td>
<td>.104**</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.202***</td>
<td>.504***</td>
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<td>(.049)</td>
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<td>52.429*</td>
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<td>ln (Distance from Headquarters) (t)</td>
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<td>Median Age of Population (t)</td>
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<td>ln (Population) (t)</td>
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<td>Number of Businesses (t)</td>
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<td>Average Household Size (t)</td>
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<td>Average Household Income (t)</td>
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<td>231.816</td>
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GC: Gaussian Copula
SMILE?! – THE ROLE OF CONSUMERS’ SELF-CONSTRUAL, ENDORSERS’ EMOTIONS AND AD APPEAL FOR SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION SUCCESS

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Keywords: endorsers’ emotion display, ad appeal, self-construal, social media
communication success

Description: This study examines the interactive relevance of endorsers’ emotion display (smiling vs. neutral), individualistic vs. collectivistic ad appeals and consumers’ independent and interdependent self-construal for social media communication success by considering consumers’ emotional state.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question
Drawing on emotional contagion theory (Hatfield, Cacioppo, and Rapson 1993/1994), ads with emotional content can increase favorable consumer responses (Kemp, Bui, and Chapa 2012) through an emotion transfer from the endorser to the recipient. Additionally, selecting “fitting” verbal appeals is crucial (Verma 2009). Ads that are congruent with consumers’ values (e.g., individualism vs. collectivism) drive ad success (Defever, Pandelaere, and Roe 2011) based on value congruity (Tuškej, Golob, and Podnar 2013). Consumer responses might be influenced by the combined effect of endorsers’ emotion display and verbal ad appeal. Moreover, individual values of consumers correlate with the way individuals perceive themselves. Consumers’ self-construal therefore gives crucial insights into ad success based on the communicated values (van Baaren and Ruivenkamp 2007). While many of these ad elements have been investigated in isolation, there is a lack of knowledge on which combination is most effective for communication success. The study aims to theoretically and empirically examine the interactive effect of endorsers’ emotion display and verbal ad appeal on ad success in terms of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and attitude towards the ad
(A_{ad}) mediated by consumers’ emotional state, and by considering the moderating effect of consumers’ self-construal.

**Method and Data**

To test the proposed relationships, an online experiment using a 2 (smiling vs. neutral emotion display) × 2 (collectivistic vs. individualistic ad appeal) between-subjects factorial design was conducted. Endorsers’ emotion display in the ad was manipulated by using photographs showing either a smiling or neutral face, the ad appeal by using either a collectivistic or an individualistic appeal (Zhang and Gelb 1996). Consumers’ independent and interdependent self-construal as well as emotional state were measured variables.

Each participant was randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. Participants were provided with a fictive Facebook ad displaying a woman (i.e., the endorser) promoting a camera with different ad appeals. After being exposed to the stimulus, participants filled in a questionnaire measuring emotional state, eWOM, A_{ad}, self-construal, and manipulation checks as well as sociodemographic data. All construct items were adapted from literature and measured using seven-point Likert scales ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. A total of 388 undergraduate and graduate students (59.50% female) from a central European University participated in the survey. The average age was 24.62 years (SD = 6.91).

**Summary of Findings**

Statistical analyses involved PROCESS Model 12 (Hayes 2018). The data prove the combined effect of endorsers’ emotion display and ad appeal on consumers’ eWOM (B=5.20, t=2.65, p<.01, R^2=.14, [1.33…9.06]) and A_{ad} (B=3.87, t=2.15, p<.05, R^2=.22, [.34….7.40]). An ad with a smiling endorser and a collectivistic ad appeal results in significantly more positive eWOM and A_{ad} than an ad displaying a smiling endorser combined with an
individualistic ad appeal. However, a neutral endorser and an individualistic ad appeal leads to significantly more positive eWOM than a neutral endorser and a collectivistic ad appeal.

The combined effect of ad appeal and endorsers’ emotion display positively influences consumers’ emotional state ($B=4.19$, $t=2.67$, $p<.01$, $R^2=.22$, $[1.10…7.27]$), which further marginally positively affects eWOM ($B=0.04$, $t=0.64$, $p<.10$, $R^2=.14$, $[-.09…..17]$) and significantly influences $A_{ad}$ ($B=0.16$, $t=2.66$, $p<.01$, $R^2=.22$, $[.04….77]$).

When consumers with an interdependent self-construal view a social media ad with a collectivistic appeal and a smiling endorser, this results in a more positive eWOM ($B =0.84$, $t=1.76$, $p<.10$, $R^2=.14$ $[-1.78…..10]$). Conditional effects show that a collectivistic ad appeal best fits to consumers with an interdependent self-construal, whereby an individualistic ad appeal is most effective for consumers with an independent self-construal.

Key Contributions

The study shows that a smiling (vs. neutral looking) endorser combined with a collectivistic (vs. individualistic) ad appeal most positively influences consumers’ emotional state, eWOM and $A_{ad}$, and consumers’ self-construal strengthens the effects. Compared to previous studies, this research contributes to the marketing literature by examining how consumers’ self-construal influences the interactive relevance of endorsers’ emotion display and verbal ad appeal for social media communication success. This research also contributes to emotional contagion theory (Hatfield, Cacioppo, and Rapson 1993/1994) in the context of social media communication which helps in deriving relevant findings for academia and management.

Marketers should select friendly endorsers showing a genuine, nice smile combined with a collectivistic ad appeal for communication success. Moreover, marketers should segment their target group and address these consumer groups individually, depending on their self-construals. Consumers with an independent self-construal can be best attracted through social media ads showing a neutral endorser and individualistic ad appeal while consumers with an
interdependent self-construal should be communicated with by including a smiling endorser and a collectivistic ad appeal to increase ad success.

**References are available upon request.**
THE ANCHORING EFFECT IN ONLINE SEARCH

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**Keywords:** anchoring, online search, search rank, choice homogeniety

**Description:** In this research, we explore whether the first option that customers see on their search list acts as an anchor and whether the strength of the anchor varies by search criteria and display of offerings.
RESEARCH QUESTION

Past research on consumer’s search behavior primarily looked at how consumers differ in terms of their search intensity (Zwick et al. 2003), i.e., the time and effort spent in searching for sellers in a market. However, excluding few exceptions of research information systems (Animesh, Viswanathan and Agarwal, 2011; Brooks, 2004) there has been very limited effort to examine the consumer dynamics in response to search ranks. In this paper, we examine whether securing the top-most rank of the search results is worth the expense.

Building on the strategic concept of first mover advantage, theories pertaining to negotiations suggest that the first offer in a negotiation acts as an anchor (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974; Gunia et al. 2013). Based on this theoretical paradigm, in the digital context, we can expect the choice appearing on top of the search list to exercise the same effect as an anchor (H1).

The theory of anchoring vignette suggests that respondents adjust their self-assessment report basis the anchoring vignette or textual depiction of individuals manifesting a particular trait, more so in presence of heterogeneity (Vonkova and Hullegie, 2011). Therefore, we expect this adjustment to be less in presence of homogeneity resulting higher anchoring effect (H2).

METHOD AND DATA

In Study 1, we use secondary data from a major OTT. The data contains information regarding 399,344 searches, bundled over 34 websites domains from 218 different countries. Here, we construct a conditional logit model (McFadden 1973) which assumes an individual
will choose the alternative that maximizes his or her utility. We then derive the unobserved utility $U_{ij}$ from choice $y_{ij}$.

In Study 2, we conduct an experiment with two conditions – homogeneous-price and heterogeneous. We presented the participants with a scenario where they were asked to imagine planning a visit to Paris for a weekend and to choose from a list of eleven options. The only difference between the two conditions was that all options had the same price and no discounts in the homogeneous-price condition. After presenting the search list, we introduce a new choice for evaluation. In the heterogeneous condition, the new option had higher price and higher rating than the top option. In the homogeneous-price condition, the new option had higher rating than the top option but identical price with the other options. The participants were then asked to indicate how high/low was the rating of this new option on a 9-point Likert scale.

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

Analyzing the empirical data (Study 1), we find Minkowski distance as a significant ($p < 0.001$) negative variable affecting the likelihood of hotel purchase implying that if a hotel is more similar to the first alternative, it is more likely to be booked, ceteris paribus. Hence, we find evidence to support the anchoring effect (H1). Additionally, overall Gini (search homogeneity) had a moderately significant ($p < 0.1$) effect on purchase probability. Further, the interaction between the overall Gini and Minkowski distance is significantly ($p < 0.001$) negative which confirms that the anchoring effect becomes stronger when searches display more homogeneous offers (H2).

The results from our experiment (Study 2) conducted among 204 participants, showed that across both conditions, the rating for the new option is evaluated high ($>5$) among those choosing other ranks (MNT=6.6), suggesting the anchoring effect of top rank (H1). Price too
is rated high (MNT=6.4), even so among those who selected options with price higher than the one given for the new option (M = 6.7). Further, comparison of the two conditions show that more percentage of consumers opt for the top rank when we have price homogeneity (7% vs. 4%) suggesting greater anchoring effect (H2).

**KEY CONTRIBUTIONS**

In terms of theoretical contribution, we contribute by extending the anchoring theory to understand and explain consumer choices in the setting of an online search site. Contrary to the traditional notion, we find that although the top rank in a search is deemed as the most attractive and the marketers bid fiercely to secure this position, it is more often used an anchor to evaluate other options, more so in presence of heterogeneity. The results also carry practical implications for both online platforms who can use the first positioned offer to increase revenue and smaller players who can increase their attractiveness by making their offer more similar to the first positioned offer.

References are available upon request.
THE MODERATING ROLE OF MARKETPLACE ORGANIC SEARCH ON EARNED SOCIAL MEDIA AND USER-GENERATED CONTENT: A MULTILEVEL MULTICHANNEL RETAILING ASSESSMENT

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*Key-words:* blogs, comments, Facebook, fans, retailers, revenues

*Description:* the authors hypothesize a theoretical model using data from social media considering business-to-business data (from hub and retailers) and fans and organic search as new variables and hypothesize the main effects of blogs comments, Facebook comments, hub organic search, and fans activities generated in the hub social media on retailers’ revenues

**EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

**Research Question**
Although research has examined the effects of user-generated content in social media (such as the content generated in Facebook, and Blogs), the role of fans and organic search and their relationship with sales remains unexplored, generating gaps for research. First, previous literature showed that hub’s user-generated content in Facebook and Instagram and firm-generated content (e.g. own site) increase hub customer acquisition (Vieira et al., 2019), but the authors did not research other predictors and moderators, such as fans and organic search. Also, this investigation used only data from the hub, without considering the retailers that work and have a partnership with the hub, generating another gap for investigation. Second, whereas marketing literature analyzed the role of fans (Naylor et al., 2012) and organic search, they studied these elements independently and exclusively derived from consumer-to-consumer field (Libai et al., 2010). Preceding investigation that used Facebook likes (Srinivasan, Rutz & Pauwels 2016), fans (Colicev et al., 2018; Lipsman et al., 2012), organic search (Han, Wiesel & Pauwels, 2016) and blog credibility (Johnson & Kaye, 2004), failed in did not use Facebook comments, and blog comments to explain retailers sales.

**Method and data**

We applied our model to data from a hub firm operating in an emergent market (Brazil). We prefer to maintain this firm as anonymous. The hub operates in a signature model and offers different solutions such as buybox, and autonomos softwares (e.g. SBOTs). Analyzing data from a hub in the last 36 months, and performance from 11 retailers in different segments, and using Hierarchical and Multilevel Mixed Models with time series regression, the authors find that all these four social media elements improves retailers’ revenues, even controlling for these outcomes in single versus multiple marketplaces. We use a Multilevel Mixed Models, in which our data is grouped by the
retailer (or store), exclusivity in selling in one marketplace (or multiple) and time. These variables are nested in more than one category. Multilevel Mixed Models has the advantage of considering the average variation between entities, uses the likelihood-ratio test (LR-test) to analyze models fitted by maximum likelihood and covers both fixed (analogous to standard regression) and random effects (summarized in terms of their estimated variances).

**Summary of Findings**

Data showed that marketplace organic search amplified the main effect of Facebook comments (b = .26; p < .001), blog comments (b = .40; p < .001), and hub organic search (b = .63; p < .01) on retailers revenues. These results indicate that when individuals are searching about the marketplace for launching their firms into the web, the social media volume earned or managed by the hub has an amplified effect. These findings recommend that companies understand that the marketplace intensifies the way that individuals are talking in social media about the hub. We did not support the moderating effect on total number of fans (b = -.19; p = NS). We undertook several robustness checks. First, we analyze the main effect of owned media as a global variable, comments as a global variable global and the interaction between owned media and comments global. The results did not show significant results on retailers’ sales and retailers’ orders. Second, we test the main effect of Instagram jointly blogs and Facebook, producing an earned social media with users generated content.

**Key Contribution**

First, hubs can organize the way that key-words are in the Google Search algorithm and ranking system. By optimizing key-words, hubs can obtain new contact and acquiring new retailers interested in selling in the marketplace. In addition, by adjusting key-words, hubs can achieve a better ranking on Google PageRank, improving its brand
visibility. Second, by optimizing key-words on marketplace organic search, retailers can obtain new contact from different marketplace firms (e.g. Alibaba, Amazon, Netshoes, Magazine Luiza, and Submarino) and have their products across multiple channel options. That multiple strategy improves revenues. In managing key-words on marketplace organic search, buyers obtain free information about the firm, product, brand, and solutions on the web according to specific keywords, which translate into revenues.
THE PERCEPTION OF CONSUMER ENVY ON SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

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Keywords: envy, benign envy, malicious envy, social networking sites (SNSs)

Description: This paper research how envy influences consumers’ social networking sites activities.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question: This research explores the relationship between the envier’s status and different types of envy and the moderating effect of envied person’s status.

Method And Data: This paper employed a combination of a scenario-based survey and a scenario-based experiment. Specifically, we measured enviers’ status on Instagram and their envy emotion which was generated based on a scenario. We used the scenario to manipulate the envied person’s status. This experiment examines whether consumers with different social status (high-power member vs. low-power member) in the social media platform tend to produce different types of envy (benign envy vs. malicious envy).

We recruited 162 participants who have an Instagram account from an online panel (Amazon Mechanical Turk). Twelve participants who did not correctly answer the attention check questions were removed from the data set. The final sample consists of 125 participants. About 43% of the respondents are female, 57% % of the participants aged from 25-34 years old, 73% of the participants are Caucasian and 73% of participants have a bachelor’s degree.
**Summary Of Findings**: Results showed that a high-power member is more likely to generate malicious envy than a low-power member and the relationship is weakened when the envied person is a high-power member than a low-power member, which is consistent with our hypothesis. Our results also suggested that a high-power member is more likely to generate benign envy than a low-power member and the relationship is weakened when the envied person is a high-power member than a low-power member.

**Key Contributions**:

Although consumer behavior in the social media setting has been examined from different perspectives, there is a lack of research on how different types of envy does are generated. Focusing on social comparison in the social media setting, this study sets to examine the relationships between different status comparison and different types of envy. Therefore, this study extends our understanding of under which conditions, different types of envy are generated among different consumer groups. Previous research largely focuses on the influence of envy on individuals in different settings. For instance, Vecchio (2010) studied the influence of envy on employees’ workplace performance and Kirchsteiger (1994) explored the roles of envy in ultimatum gaming behaviors. In contrast, our research provides new insights into how and which condition either malicious or benign envy is generated. Moreover, we propose that which type of envy will be generated depends on which consumer groups the envier compare with. Also, we examined the pivotal role of both the envier’s and the envied person’s status in generating envy and moderating the relationship between envy and SNSs activities. This finding will shed new light on the social comparison mechanism underlying envy.

References are available upon request.
THE POWER OF THE NETWORKING CONSUMER

ANALYZING THE EGYPTIAN “LET IT RUST” CAMPAIGN ON FACEBOOK
FROM A CONSUMER EMPOWERMENT PERSPECTIVE

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Keywords: Networking – Consumer – Facebook – Empowerment – Egyptian

Description: The current paper addresses the case of “Let it Rust” Facebook campaign to boycott car purchase in Egypt.
ABSTRACT

The current study examines how “Let it Rust” campaign on Facebook managed to use consumer power strategies to persuade users to join their cause and boycott car sellers because of high prices. Findings indicate a high usage of participation strategy as the main strategy used by campaign administrators.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of “Online consumer empowerment” has been increasingly recognized in the digital age, as the rapid evolution of social technologies has led to a parallel evolution of consumer empowerment (Siano, Vollero, & Palazzo, 2011). Studies refer to the Arab Spring and others focus on open databases that help citizens in “decision-making” and “social-reality construction” through information re-use and retransmission (Christensen & Titley, 2014; García, Barrio, & Fernández, 2014).

Nevertheless, the online consumer empowerment strategies were rarely applied on the Egyptian society in the previous scientific literature, despite the fact that Egypt has been witnessing many consumer empowerment initiatives on social media and despite the fact that Egyptians beat out Saudi Arabians, Emirati and UAE residents for the highest number of users on social media platforms according to Crowd Analyzer’s State of Social Media Report 2018 (Ahmed, 2017).

In 2018, a campaign under the name “Let it Rust” surfaced on Facebook to boycott the purchase of new cars. 200,000 people joined the campaign within the next following days mirroring quick campaign engagement among the public (Al-Ahram 31 Jan., 2019). The cause of the campaign is summarized in the fact that consumers have waited for car prices to decrease as a result of the complete removal of customs’ tariffs.
on European cars; a decision put into effect at the start of 2019 as a part of the EU free-trade agreement. In June, the followers reached 2 million (Arabfinance.com, 2019).

There is a scarcity in the studies of consumer empowerment especially in the Arab countries because of the novelty of the term and the insufficiency of academic exploration that aims to understand how this empowerment functions on the internet (Umit Kucuk, 2009). Therefore, the first research question has been formulated as follows:

RQ1: What is the most used consumer power strategy by campaign admins?

Researchers have argued that both; the type and level of network participation, somehow define consumer empowerment and value creation (Labrecque, Esche, Mathwick, Novak, & Hofacker, 2013). The arrival of digital media has led to the biggest transformation in the relationship between people and media as it personified the prosumer role of citizens by allowing some recipients to frequently occupy the role of senders (García-Galera & Valdivia, 2014). This leads us to the second research question:

RQ2: How does post interactivity (participation, comments & interaction) vary with the consumer power strategy?

METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on the identification of administrators’ efforts of the “Let it Rust” campaign on Facebook to persuade potential customers to join the campaign according to the use of consumer power strategies and persuasion strategies; in addition to monitoring the interactivity and responses to the campaign. This study also focuses on measuring to what extent Egyptian consumers believe in the power of social media...
through an online survey on a small sample of above-twenty consumers. Therefore, the two following methods were used:

**Content Analysis**

Utilizing Denegri-Knott’s (2006) consumer strategies of power on the web, a content analysis of the campaign “Let it Rust” is conducted:

1. To examine the presence of four online power strategies (information, aggregation, participation, and control over the relationship) in 117 of the campaign posts, posted by the admins, from the beginning of February to the end of April 2019.

2. During the search for consumer power strategies used in the campaign, certain appeals were observed to be used by the administrators of “Let it Rust”. The appeals were classified into emotional, rational and fear appeals (Al-Wafi & Enab, 2016; Elham, 2016). Therefore, the following research questions have been formulated:

   **RQ3**: Which appeals were used by campaign admins?

   **RQ3a**: Is there a relationship between consumer power strategies and appeals used in the campaign?

3. Different methods of persuasion were also used by the administrators and were monitored through content analysis. The persuasion methods used in the campaign were classified into psycho-dynamic strategy, socio-cultural strategy and meaning construction strategy (Al-Wafi & Enab, 2016). This led to the formulation of the following question:

   **RQ4**: What is the most used method of persuasion by campaign admins?
Survey

A survey was, then, distributed over a sample of 115 respondents, above the age of 20, using a 5-point Likert scale for the following reasons:

1. Test their attitudes towards Denegri-Knott’s consumer power strategies.
2. To measure their beliefs in the power of social media.

The end of the questionnaire was dedicated to specific questions about the campaign itself and reasons for its success from the respondents’ viewpoints. This will give us an insight into whether consumers can create or be part of similar consumer empowerment initiatives in the future.

Results

Content Analysis Results

The findings of content analysis provided answers to the proposed research questions as follows:

RQ1: What is the most used consumer power strategy by campaign admins?

The main consumer power strategy used is “participation” with 54.7%, followed by 28.2% of the posts demonstrating the strategy of “control over the relationship”.

RQ2: How does post interactivity (participation, comments & interaction) vary with the consumer power strategy?

When control strategy is used, interactivity is medium; however, when participation and information strategies are used, the interactivity is low. When aggregation strategy is used, interaction is either low or medium.

RQ3: Which appeals were used by campaign admins?
Analyzing the appeals used in the campaign showed that the rational appeal is the highest used with 58.1%, followed by the emotional appeal with 41%, and only 0.9% of the posts used fear appeal.

RQ3a: Is there a relationship between consumer power strategies and appeals used in the campaign?

When participation strategy is used, the main appeal is rational. As for the remaining strategies, the main appeal used is the emotional appeal.

RQ4: What is the most used method of persuasion by campaign admins?

Regardless of the consumer power strategy in use, the most used persuasion method is the psychodynamic method.

**Survey Results**

(1) The survey showed respondents’ attitudes towards consumer power strategies. See table (1) for more details.

(2) The survey also showed to what extent respondents believe in the power of social media as follows:

- A total of 73.9% of the respondents see that social networking sites clarify consumers’ power.

- A total of 70.4% of the respondents see that social networking sites are considered an influential force in spreading URLs of those websites that spread consumer culture and rights.
A total of 76.6% of the respondents see that social networking sites are characterized by non-existent restrictions on expressing personal opinions related to consumer problems.

A total of 66.9% of the respondents see that social networking sites help prevent inappropriate or incredible ads.

A total of 54.8% of the respondents see that social networking sites represent an effective power in Egypt to boycott some products now.

**Discussion**

The importance of consumer empowerment stems from the fact of shifting the power from marketers to consumers, where consumers are have become able to receive and co-create media content in uncontrollable ways.

Findings of the current study suggest the importance of co-creation in social media marketing today. The power of participation as a consumer empowerment strategy reinforces that fact, where consumers' co-creation skills have proved important in proposing the innovation and development of new products & services, as well as using WOM to explain how a specific product is used (Alexander & Jaakkola, 2014).

The main consumer power strategy used in the posts was the “participation” strategy. This finding disagrees with the findings from a study conducted on consumer empowerment of Egyptian women, where the most used power strategy was information followed by participation (Orabi 2019) and aggregation followed by participation in the case of bloggers (Dickinson, Kerr, Mortimer, & Waller, 2012).

Findings of the current study also suggest the high use of rational appeals in "Let it Rust" as opposed to emotional appeals; a fact that further suggests the importance of information in empowering consumers.
The survey findings give us insights into whether consumers can create or be part of other similar consumer empowerment campaigns in the future. This is demonstrated in how they believe in the power of social networking sites. Findings show that the majority of them believe that social networking sites clarify consumers’ power, are considered an influential force in spreading URLs/links of those websites that publish/spread consumer culture and rights, contribute to spreading the culture of consumer rights, are characterized by non-existent restrictions on expressing personal opinions related to consumer problems and represent an effective power in Egypt to boycott some products now.

The importance of consumer empowerment in Egypt stems from the fact of the increasing use of social media platforms, as well as prices' increase; a fact that has been supported by survey findings as the majority of respondents who think "Let it Rust" is a successful campaign, relate its success to spreading the boycotting culture/concept and its efficiency in fighting high prices.

From an academic perspective, the current findings recommend more focus on consumer empowerment from a consumer behavior approach, where motives behind joining an online or a social media campaign, such as "Let it Rust", can be further investigated and where social campaigns on other platforms can also be investigated.

From a non-academic perspective, consumer empowerment is a significant part of strategic marketing management. Social networks have amplified the power of Word-of-mouth and helped consumers to further make their voices heard more than ever. Companies attacked in social campaigns, such as “Let it Rust”, should further reconsider their crises management strategies in response to such social media campaigns. Companies' feedback and how they give that feedback are very critical in such cases.
### Table 1

*Respondents’ Attitudes towards Consumer Power Strategies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Power strategies</th>
<th>Respondents’ attitudes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control as power</td>
<td>The majority of respondents with 60.9% “strongly agree” that social networking sites represent an opportunity for consumers to express their opinions and complaints.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>47% of the respondents selected “neutral”, while 26.1% agreed that social networking sites provide consumers with information that enables them to offer support to the legislator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregation</td>
<td>47.8% of the respondents strongly agreed, while 32.2% agreed that social networking sites represent a way of assembling similar opinions &amp; mobilizing them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>49.6% and 29.6% strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, that social networking sites have become a tool of pressure on organizations &amp; companies in the Egyptian society.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: https://data.mendeley.com/datasets/dd5dfbyt9j/1
References


TRAJECTORY-BASED VERSUS LOCATION-BASED COMPETITIVE MOBILE TARGETING: THE ROLE OF PRIVACY RIGHTS STATUTES

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Keywords: competitive physical retailers, location-based mobile targeting, trajectory-based mobile targeting, GDPR, CCPA.

Description: Assuming that privacy rights statutes like GDPR and CCPA may hinder the use of trajectory-based targeting in favor of location-based targeting, we show that such statutes (1) may end up hurting consumers overall while benefiting the competitive retailers; (2) result in excessive price risk for a consumer found in the turf of one of the retailers; and (3) facilitate tacit collusion for the retailers when a consumer is found outside of each and every retailer’s turf.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question: At first, rapid advancements in mobile technologies have allowed marketers to perform location-based mobile targeting (Luo et al. 2014; Fang et al. 2015; Fong et al. 2015; Dub e et al. 2017), and recent field experiments reveal that the novel trajectory-based mobile tar-
targeting can be even more powerful (Ghose, Li, and Liu 2019). Despite this experimental/empirical literature, little is known regarding whether location-based mobile targeting can really benefit competitive physical retailers, and whether trajectory-based mobile targeting would outperform location-based mobile targeting in that regard. This paper intends to fill this gap. Second, privacy rights statutes seem to hinder marketers’ use of data that are highly personal, and some authors (e.g. Cezar and Raghunathan 2016) argue that such statutes may discourage trajectory-based mobile targeting in favor of location-based mobile targeting. Taking this view, the current paper intends to examine how such statutes may impact retail competition and consumer well-being.

Summary of Findings: Assuming that the privacy rights statutes may hinder the use of trajectory-based targeting in favor of location-based targeting, we show that: (i) the statutes aiming at protecting consumers may end up hurting consumers while benefiting the retailers; (ii) the statutes may remove pure-strategy equilibria when the consumer is located close to one of the competing retailers, resulting in the consumer facing excessive uncertainty regarding the transaction price as well as the identity of the serving retailer; (iii) the statutes may promote the likelihood that the two retailers can perform tacit collusion when the consumer is located far away from both retailers; (iv) without the statutes it is the consumers located far away from both retailers that get the lowest prices, but with the statutes those con-
sumers may become the most exploited victims; and (v) the statutes may benefit the consumers highly adjacent to one of the retailers.

Statement of Key Contributions: First, our results reveal a distributational effect that has never been identified before: location-based mobile targeting benefit competitive retailers more than trajectory-based mobile targeting does when retailers are competing for a consumer found outside of each and every retailer's turf, but the opposite can happen when a consumer is found in one retailer's turf. Second, by interpreting privacy rights statutes as restricting the amount of personal information that marketing strategies are allowed to base on, so that they restrict the use of trajectory-based mobile targeting in favor of location-based mobile targeting, the current paper renders a new perspective for evaluating the impact of privacy rights statutes on marketing efficiency and consumer well-being—such statutes aim at guarding consumer well-being but may end up hurting consumers while benefiting physical retailers.
Unpacking the concept of influencers: the moderating role of Social Media Influencers in service failure recovery strategies

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Key words: social media influencers, service failure recovery, millennials, social constructivist, actor network theory

Description

Prior research has advanced several explanations for social media influencers’ (SMIs’) success in the burgeoning computer-mediated marketing environments but leaves one key topic unexplored: the moderating role of SMIs in service failure recovery strategies. This study adds to the literature by analysing the nature of influencer marketing from the credibility of source perspective to the congruence effects between SMIs’ and consumers’ perceptions, particularly on the mediating role of influencers on failure recovery processes. Building on actor–network theory, this study conceptualises four distinct pathways unifying SMIs’ efforts in the service failure recovery process. The emergent dual funnel model illustrates how the effortful processing of social media content, source credibility and message content moderate service failure severity and speed of recovery. The insights gained from our model contribute to research on the pivotal uniqueness of SMIs in service failure recovery processes and offer practical explanations of variations in the implementation of influencer marketing.
Research Question
The significance of influencer marketing within social media suggests that SMIs cannot be excluded from a brand’s communication strategy (Singh et al., 2020). Our findings reveal that influencers’ engagement can reduce the perceived severity of service failures and enhance recovery procedures, thus motivating customers to remain with brands. However, the findings also reveal several risks associated with employing influencers as part of recovery strategies that brands must consider, including a perceived mismatch between the influencer and the brand, and the diverse criteria individual customers apply when evaluating their recovery experience and the influencer’s contribution. Brands must approach their employment of influencers with caution by considering the behavioural characteristics they deliver through social media and how customers will respond to them. The present research clarifies that there are different socio-technical processes involved in how SMIs approach their audience and how customers react to the influencers’ delivery in service failure and recovery situations. For instance, SMIs participate in sharing commercial and non-commercial content, and both have the potential to influence the behaviour of their audience (Stubb and Colliander, 2019; Ozuem et al 2021a). However, the effectiveness of their contributed content and delivery approach can be reduced by service failures. If the volume of commercial content exceeds non-commercial content, or if influencers’ content is mainly focused on directly selling the reviewed branded products, then this could generate perceived inconsistencies if customers encounter service failures. This outcome becomes more severe if the influencer does not have a perceived passion beyond the commercial orientation of their involvement, thus weakening his/her character profile (Audrezet et al., 2018) as well as his/her perceived impact on service recovery.
Methodology and Methods

Social constructivism challenges preconceptions regarding knowledge generation and immediate assumptions about how reality is displayed for humanity in general and individuals in particular. Indeed, social constructivism enables a critical stance in relation to our understanding of historical and cultural dimensions; that is, that all phenomena are developed and understood through historical transformation and so are consequently relative to specific times and situations (Ozuem et al 2021b). Not only are phenomena relative to historical and cultural environments, but they are also derived through meanings relating to given times and situations through economic and social relationships, as well as the particular notions of what knowledge entails in a given era/epoch.

Through theoretical coding, empirical data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Open-ended questions were adopted to obtain answers reflecting a spontaneous perspective on how SMIs enhance consumers’ responses to service failures in the fashion industry (Schmidt, 2010; Geer, 1988). The main questions asked in the data collection concerned the narration of experiences of online purchase behaviour, a description of the SMIs most visited over time, and an explanation of their impact on the consumer’s reactions to service failures. To address the aim of our study, millennials of ages ranging between 18 and 39 years were selected. This was because, being virtually interactive, they follow SMIs (Daniel, Crawford Jackson and Westerman, 2018) and exhibit the highest internet usage and preference for online shopping (Dharmesti, Dharmesti, Kuhne and Thaichon, 2019). A total of 120 millennials were invited to participate, 58 of whom agreed to be interviewed (the participants’ socio-demographic information is summarised in Table 1). These millennials were recruited from, and interviewed in, each of the researchers’ countries: France, Italy and the UK. The interviews, which lasted
35 to 50 minutes, were conducted through virtual platforms (Adobe, Zoom, Google Meet, Teams, Skype) to comply with COVID-19 social distancing regulations.

**Summary of findings and Key Contributions**

This study examines a perspective of SMIs that considers the cycle of their influence on customers through service failure and recovery. The study summarises this cycle, illustrated in the dual funnel model (Figure 2), through four key themes identified following interpretation of interview data: perceived credibility of source, authentic passion, self-congruency and responsibility of influencers. Each of the discussed themes plays a major role in shaping how customers perceive SMIs involved in service failure and recovery efforts. This study finds that the positive effect of SMIs on customers is not immediate or based on short-term interactions with providers’ services or the influencers themselves. The findings suggest that negative reactions towards service failure and recovery are reduced if customers have a relationship with influencers prior to the service failure and recovery compared with the reactions of customers who do not have a relationship with the influencer. Therefore, the influence process of SMIs may begin prior to service recovery processes for some customers and begin at the beginning of service failures for other customers.

**References**


What factors encourage information sharing on social media? The role of the self-connection

Miyea Kim, Mina Jun, and Jeongsoo Han

This study collected data from consumers using social media (Facebook) in Republic of Korea. Data collection was conducted as a quota sample by requesting surveys from professional survey institutions for a fairly distributed ratio of all age groups regarding data collection and in order to increase external validity.

The primary goal of this study was to estimate the influence of self-connection on information sharing. To this end, regression analysis was conducted. The standard coefficient for the effect of self-connection on information sharing is positive and significant ($b = 0.582$, $t$-value=14.226, $p < 0.01$). Next, we conducted a mediation test to examine the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between self-connection and information sharing by applying the Hayes PROCESS macro (Preacher and Hayes, 2008). The mediation analysis revealed that the effect of self-connection on information sharing in social media is mediated by self-efficacy (Hayes 2009, Rucker et al. 2011). Specifically, the total effect of self-connection on information sharing was significant ($c=.582$, $t=14.226$, $p=.000$). The effect of self-connection on self-efficacy was also significant ($a=.4848$, $t=11.7627$, $p=.000$). The relationship between self-efficacy and information sharing was positive and significant as well ($b=.3355$, $t=8.1812$, $p=.000$). The direct effect of self-connection on information sharing was significant ($c'=.4189$, $t=9.6657$, $p=.000$). Finally, the estimated indirect effect of self-connection on information sharing mediated by self-efficacy was significant ($a*b=.1627$, 95% CI [.1103, .2178]).

The goal of this study was to provide a better, deeper understanding of why people tend to share information on social media, by examining the desires that trigger this motivation. Specifically, we investigated the impact of self-connection on information sharing behavior through the mediating roles of self-efficacy. We found that self-connection enhances information sharing not only directly but also indirectly through its positive effect on self-efficacy.
References


Why do users participate in Social Commerce? Changing Trends and Insights from a longitudinal study?

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Abstract

Literature is sparse on the psychology of users who participate in social commerce. In this exploratory study with 222 student users we apply the theory of fundamental human needs to predict and assess the psychological profile of users who enthusiastically engage in social commerce. The finding of the study support our hypothesis but with a few unexpected findings. Need of relationship, self-esteem and popularity-influence were found to positively impact the behavioral intention, frequency and time users spent on social commerce.

Keywords

Social Commerce Intention, Need for Autonomy, Need for Self-Esteem, Need for Relatedness

Statement of Contribution

Users with a high need for autonomy, Self-Esteem and Relatedness were found to indulge in social commerce. The findings have useful practical implications for product/project managers in understanding what motivates users to engage in social commerce and how social commerce websites can be designed to further enhance user participation in social commerce.
Introduction

Social commerce merges online shopping with social networking through the use of Internet-based social media (Stephen and Toubia, 2009). It includes three essential components: social media technologies (such as Web 2.0/3.0), online community interactions, and online commercial activities (Liang and Turban, 2011). The online community interactions can be enabled by either adding a social layer to an ecommerce website or an ecommerce layer on social networking sites or a combination of commercial interactions on social media and business transactions on ecommerce websites. However, irrespective of the mechanism adopted, the social interactions should be commercially oriented. For example, sharing photos, jokes and thoughts not related to commercial activities are not considered to be social commerce. However, activities such as user forums discussing technologies, products and services; and user referrals, reviews and recommendations on internet based social media are considered social commerce (Hajli, 2013; Pelaez et al., 2013; Marsden 2009a).

Social commerce is widely acknowledged to have huge impact on ecommerce. A McKinsey 2012 report (https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/McKinsey/Industries/Technology%20Media%20and%20Telecommunications/High%20Tech/Our%20Insights/The%20social%20economy/Executive_Summary.ashx), estimates that social commerce influences around one third of consumer spending valued at $900 billion to $1.3 trillion in sales (Chiu et al., 2012). A study of UK consumers reported that around half of them will participate in social commerce by 2021 (Lu et al., 2016). However, despite its huge impact, there is a gap in literature. While there is a stream of research on the factors that influence Social Commerce Intention (SCI), one core aspect the users’ psychological needs has been surprisingly ignored in models predicting SCI, and actual use of websites for social commerce. The underlying assumption in social commerce research is that users are a homogeneous category.

However, in this research we suggest that the psychological profile of users vary and is salient in impacting their SCI and actual participation. We focus our study on participants in social commerce by conducting a multi-disciplinary review of literature to identify their salient psychological needs with the goal of providing answers the following questions. Is psychological needs profile of participants of social commerce different from other software users and if so, what is the difference? Does user’s psychological needs profile vary with time? How does the psychological needs impact their behavioral intention (SCI), as well as actual participation in terms of frequency (FRQ) and time (TIME) spent on social commerce websites? The answers to these questions will enable product/project manager of social media/online websites to better understand their users of social commerce websites and develop strategies to meet their specific needs. This will enhance SCI and actual participation in social commerce resulting in benefits to both consumers and businesses through providing greater information on products and services and increased consumer spending (Lu et al., 2016).

Theory Development

User’s Psychological Needs

There is a stream of research on fundamental human needs starting with McDougall (1908), Freud (1920), Murray (1938), Maslow (1954), Baumeister and Leary, (1995) and Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe and Ryan (2000). In a more recent development, Sheldon, Elliot, Kim and Kasser (2001) examined 10 different feelings. The identified set of 10 basic human needs (autonomy, competence, relatedness, physical thriving, security, self-esteem, self-actualization, pleasure-stimulation, money-luxury, and popularity-influence), are in line with past theories within the human motivation literature stream (Sheldon, Elliot, Kim and Kasser, 2001).

Social value is relevant in online shopping and provides distinctive benefits (Kakar and Kakar, 2020). Individuals often look for social interactions to overcome their loneliness (Tauber, 1972; Forman and Sriram 1991). The instore retail outlets provide more opportunities for social interaction, such as shopping with family and friends or simply people watching or interacting with sales people and other customers at the stores (Tauber 1972; Price and Arnould 1999; Woodruffe-Burton et al. 2002). However, these interactions are possible only to a limited extent in ecommerce but are made possible through social media in social commerce. People have a desire to be socially accepted and loved (Baumeister and Leary 1995; Leary, Kelly, and
Schreindorfer, 2001). This need to belong is a "fundamental human motivation that is something all human beings possess ... to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships" (Baumeister and Leary 1995, p. 497). Social media provides a means for users to fulfill this need. People with a higher need for relationship will therefore have a higher SCI, FRQ and TIME. Thus,

Hypothesis 1: Users who over-indulge in social commerce have a higher need for relatedness
Hypothesis 2: Users’ need for relatedness will positively impact their Social Commerce Intention and the time and frequency of their engagement in social commerce activities

Yet, overcoming loneliness and the need to belong and be loved are not the only objectives of social interactions. Its experiential meaning is more complex and can be understood from a symbolic interactionist perspective (Blumer, 2012). The symbolic value of social interactions is very different from the functional and hedonic value (Kakar, 2020abcdefg; Kakar, 2017ab; Kakar, 2015abc). Sheth et al. (1991) observed that even products and services generally thought to be functional or utilitarian (e.g., Overby and Lee, 2006; Fiore, Jin, and Kim, 2005; Kakar, 2012ab; Kakar, 2014; Kakar, 2018abcd) are frequently selected on the basis of their social value one of the dimensions of which is self-esteem (see Rintamaki et al., 2006; Kakar, 2016abcd). Shoppers are able to express their personal values through sharing their shopping experience and preferences (Chandon et al., 2000). For example, the values of “not animal testing, support community trade, activate self-esteem, defend human rights, protect our planet” (Body Shop, 2007) are expressed by consumers shopping at Body Shop. Social commerce provides a means for individuals to express and share these values online. Even people with social competence deficits and low self-esteem offline and can boost their self-image online without having to meet them (Wu, Huang, Chen, Davison and Hua, 2018). They can receive recognition, positive feedback and friendship based on their online participation, self-expression and disclosures (Shaw and Grant, 2002; King and Lee, 2011) and achieve the same level of social intimacy in virtual environment as they would have experienced in a real-life environment (Mathwick et al., 2008). Therefore, we suggest

Hypothesis 3: Users who over-indulge in social commerce have a higher need for self-esteem
Hypothesis 4: Users’ need for self-esteem will positively impact their Social Commerce Intention and the time and frequency of their engagement in social commerce activities

The need for popularity-influence is the need to be “liked, respected, and have influence over others rather than feeling like a person whose advice or options nobody is interested in.” (Zhu and Chen, 2015). The need for popularity-influence differs from the need to belong which is characterized by the desire to form “lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships.” (Baumeister and Leary 1995, p. 497). While a few intimate relationships can satisfy this need the need for popularity-influence can be satisfied only through a large number of (often superficial) relationships such as for example the relationship between a celebrity and her fans. People high in need for popularity-influence have impression management goals (Utz, Tanis and Vermeulen, 2012). Social commerce allows such individuals unique opportunities for self-presentation and provides reach. They can address a very large audience with just one mouse click and gain popularity through communicating their unique insights and interesting experiences to a large number of people quickly. Thus,

Hypothesis 5: Users who over-indulge in social commerce have a higher need for popularity-influence
Hypothesis 6: Users’ need for popularity-influence will positively impact their Social Commerce Intention and the time and frequency of their engagement in social commerce activities

METHOD

Setting and Subjects
The subjects for the study were recruited from a medium-sized public university in the south. The college of business of this university encourages research exposure by awarding students extra credit for research participation. An email was sent to all 2304 students of the college of business inviting them to participate in the study. Only those students who agreed to provide data in both rounds of the study, at the end of the Fall semester, 2019 and at the end of Spring semester 2020 were recruited for the study. We received a total of 240 responses. Based on this response we
invited all 240 students to participate in the study. Among those invited to participate 222 actually participated in both rounds of the study. The participants were 19-23 years old. 51.5% respondents were female, and 49.5% respondents were male.

**Measures Used**

The 10 human psychological needs were each represented by the 3-item scale (Sheldon, Elliot, Kim and Kasser, 2001) and the SCI was captured using a measure developed by (Hajli, 2001). which used 4 items (see Appendix A for detailed list of items). All measures used a 9-point Likert scale with anchors of 9 (strongly agree) and 1 (strongly disagree). Responses were coded such that high levels of the constructs are represented by high values. Some items were reverse coded. The overall value for each construct was created by averaging the user responses.

**Procedure**

All respondents who participated in the study agreed to provide the browsing history of all the computing devices they used. A software tool was provided to the participants that automatically generated the frequency and time spent in social commerce activities. The software used the list of top social commerce websites gleaned from: [https://www.similarweb.com/top-websites/category/e-commerce-and-shopping](https://www.similarweb.com/top-websites/category/e-commerce-and-shopping) and [https://blog.feedsport.com/e-commerce_blogs/](https://blog.feedsport.com/e-commerce_blogs/).

The software was run by the participants themselves to provide the data. In case some social commerce websites accessed by the participants were not included in the statistics the participant had the choice to add them in the list (deletion from the list was not allowed) and run the software again to provide a more comprehensive historical data. The historical data summary from students was validated by two research associates.

Participants answered the survey questionnaire regarding demographics, their psychological needs (Appendix A) and SCI at the beginning of Fall 2019 semester. They also answered the questionnaire on their psychological needs and SCI at the end of the semester Fall 2020 semester.

Two groups of participants were created for analysis. The first group of participants (constituting Group A of 73 students) were those that participated in social commerce for one standard deviations above the mean TIME for the group of all participants. The other group consisted of remaining subjects (constituting Group B of 149 students).

We adapted the widely accepted (Brandt, 1987; Anderson and Mittal, 2000; Brandt, 1988; Mittal, Ross and Baldasare, 1998) PRCA (Penalty Reward Contrast Analysis) technique for analyzing the data collected in Round 1 and Round 2 to test the hypotheses. By having two sets of dummy variables representing each group indicating high value (1 SD above mean) of psychological needs (1,0) and a low value of (0,1) representing, multiple regression analysis is conducted with usage (TIME and FRQ) and SCI as independent variable. Using this statistical approach, we get two regression coefficients for each user need, one (high) representing the impact of high level of psychological need on computer usage and the other representing the impact of low level of psychological need on computer usage.

**RESULTS AND ANALYSES**

The results of the factor analysis (see Appendix B) show that the factors extracted using Varimax rotation represented the scales used in the study. The high loadings (> .50) within factors demonstrated convergent validity of items within scales, and the no cross loadings (> .40) between factors demonstrated discriminant validity between scales. The internal reliabilities of all the scales used in the study were greater than .70. Further none of the inter-correlations between the scales were greater than .65.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological Need</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>PT</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>ST</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>PS</th>
<th>ML</th>
<th>PI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Round 1</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Round 2</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference (Round 2-Round 1)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.5*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.2*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05

**Table 1. Users’ Psychological Needs in Round 1 and Round 2**
From Table 1 we can see that except for user need for Physical Thriving and the user need for Pleasure Stimulation the user needs in Round 1 and Round 2 were relatively stable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological Need</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>PT</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>ST</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>PS</th>
<th>ML</th>
<th>PI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group B</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group A</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>0.6*</td>
<td>-0.8*</td>
<td>-4*</td>
<td>-4*</td>
<td>-0.9*</td>
<td>-0.2*</td>
<td>0.8*</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
<td>0.6*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05

Table 2. Users’ Psychological Needs of Group A and Group B in Round 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological Need</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>PT</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>ST</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>PS</th>
<th>ML</th>
<th>PI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group B</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group A</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>0.6*</td>
<td>-0.9*</td>
<td>-4*</td>
<td>-5*</td>
<td>-0.9</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
<td>0.3*</td>
<td>0.6*</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
<td>0.6*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05

Table 3. Users’ Psychological Needs of Group A and Group B in Round 2

From Table 2 and 3 we can see that except for user needs of security and money luxury, the psychological needs profile of users in Group A (heavy participation in social commerce) and Group B (not so heavy participation in social commerce) in Round 1 as well and Round 2 were significantly different.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavioral Intention (SCI)</th>
<th>Frequency (FRQ)</th>
<th>Time of Usage (TIME)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Round 1 overall</td>
<td>Round 2 overall</td>
<td>Round 1 group A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>8.31</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>7.13</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Users’ Psychological Needs of Group A and Group B in Round 2

From Table 4 we can see that the behavioral Intention to indulge in social commerce and actual usage (FRQ and TIME) were higher for the Group A then for the overall group of subjects in both rounds 1 and round 2. SCI, FRQ and TIME were higher in round 2 than in round 1 for both group A and the overall group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological Needs - &gt;</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>PT</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>ST</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>PI</th>
<th>ML</th>
<th>PS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRCA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>.63*</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-14</td>
<td>-06</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.38*</td>
<td>.54*</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05

Low= Regression Coefficient at low need
NI=Regression Coefficient at high need
PRCA= Penalty Reward Contrast Analysis

Table 5. Results of regressing high and low levels of user needs on SCI Round 1
The results of Tables 5 and 6 show that as hypothesized users with high need for Relationship, Popularity and Self-Esteem positively impacted SCI. The impacts of other psychological needs on SCI were not significant.

Table 6. Results of regressing high and low levels of user needs on SCI Round 2

Table 7. Results of regressing high and low levels of user needs on FRQ Round 1

Table 8. Results of regressing high and low levels of user needs on FRQ Round 2

Table 9. Results of regressing high and low levels of user needs on TIME Round 1
The results of Table 7, 8, 9 and 10 show that as hypothesized users with high need for Relationship, Popularity and Self-Esteem positively impacted usage of gaming software as measured by frequency of use (FRQ) and time of use (TIME). The impacts of other psychological needs on FRQ and TIME were not significant.

**Discussion**

Thus, all the six hypothesis were supported by the findings in the study. The user needs for Relationship, Popularity and Self-Esteem were higher for over-indulgent participants of social commerce. The three needs not only impacted the SCI of participants of social commerce but also their actual usage as measured by FRQ and TIME. The findings of the study also showed that overall the users’ psychological needs were fairly stable and enduring over time. The significant increase in need for physical thriving and pleasure-stimulation in round 2 could possibly have been due to coronavirus as the first round of the study was conducted in the pre-coronavirus era while the second round was conducted (partly) in the post-coronavirus era.

Although, there were a significant difference psychological profile of users between Groups A and B in 8 of the 10 psychological needs, the impact of only three psychological needs on SCI, FRQ and TIME were significant – Relationship, Popularity and Self-Esteem. Further, as can be seen from the regression coefficients the impact of relationship was greater than the impact of popularity-influence and self-esteem on SCI, FRQ and TIME. The greatest difference in psychological needs between participants in Groups A and B was in Self-Actualization and Competence followed by Popularity-Influence and Relationship. However, the impact of both Self-Actualization and Competence on SCI, FRQ and TIME was not found to be significant.

A noteworthy finding of the study is the increased SCI, TIME and FRQ in round 2 which was conducted in the post-coronavirus era over SCI, TIME and FRQ in round 1 which was conducted in the pre-coronavirus era (Table 6). It could be due to social distancing practiced by a large number of people in the post-coronavirus period. With people spending more time indoors and with less outdoor shopping, the need of social interactions could be fulfilled online without the need for personal contact through social commerce. Further, perhaps for the same reason the impacts of relatedness, self-esteem and popularity influence on SCI, TIME and FRQ was found to be consistently higher in round 1 compared to round 2 (Tables 7-12). With experts predicting that social distancing will remain with us for a long time, we can expect social commerce to be more prevalent in the future too. It is also likely that these developments will lead to more people shifting from instore shopping to ecommerce as past research has shown that an increase in social commerce leads to an increase in online shopping.

**Contribution**

The findings of the study has practical implications. Increasing the frequency of user participation and the number of participants is important for success of social commerce (Liang and Turban, 2011). Knowing the user profile and addressing their needs more effectively can not only be helpful to social commerce websites in retaining their existing users but in attracting new users as well. It is estimated that nearly one third of all consumer spending is influenced by social commerce (Lu et al., 2016). Thus, increased user and usage at social commerce websites is not only important for social commerce but consumer markets in general.
Product/ project managers can use their innovative abilities to provide features on their social commerce websites that meet the identified psychological needs of participants to retain increase their user base. For example, to fulfill the salient relatedness, self-esteem and popularity-influence needs, social commerce websites can enable real-time interactions between users. Further, technological and informational features can be introduced that provide a socially supportive environment on the website by recognizing user contributions and encouraging mutual help. Providing socially rich text, multimedia contents, physically embodied agents, text-to-voice features can convey a feeling of social engagement and personal touch to the interactions. Additionally, providing personalized information, ratings on the quality of content and statistics on followers can help social commerce participants to track and enhance their social presence.

References


Rintamäki, T., Kanto, A., Kuusela, H. and Spence, M. T. (2006). Decomposing the value of department store shopping into utilitarian,


APPENDIX A. Measure used in the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Users’ Psychological Needs used in the Study (Sheldon, Elliot, Kim and Kasser, 2001)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Autonomy</td>
<td>A1 That my choices were based on my true interests and values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A2 Free to do things my own way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A3 That my choices expressed my &quot;true self.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Competence</td>
<td>C1 That I was successfully completing difficult tasks and projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C2 That I was taking on and mastering hard challenges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C3 Very capable in what I did.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Relatedness</td>
<td>R1 A sense of contact with people who care for me, and whom I care for.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R2 Close and connected with other people who are important to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R3 A strong sense of intimacy with the people I spent time with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Self-actualization-meaning</td>
<td>SA1 That I was &quot;becoming who I really am.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SA2 A sense of deeper purpose in life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SA3 A deeper understanding of myself and my place in the universe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Physical thriving</td>
<td>PT1 That I got enough exercise and was in excellent physical condition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PT2 That my body was getting just what it needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PT3 A strong sense of physical well-being.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Pleasure-stimulation</td>
<td>PL1 That I was experiencing new sensations and activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PL2 Intense physical pleasure and enjoyment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PL3 That I had found new sources and types of stimulation for myself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Money-luxury</td>
<td>ML1 Able to buy most of the things I want.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ML2 That I had nice things and possessions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ML3 That I got plenty of money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Security</td>
<td>SE1 That my life was structured and predictable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SE2 Glad that I have a comfortable set of routines and habits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SE3 Safe from threats and uncertainties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Self-esteem</td>
<td>ST1 That I had many positive qualities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ST2 Quite satisfied with who I am.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ST3 A strong sense of self-respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Popularity-influence</td>
<td>PI1 That I was a person whose advice others seek out and follow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PI2 That I strongly influenced others’ beliefs and behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PI3 That I had strong impact on what other people did.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure for Social Commerce Intention (Hajli, 2014)</td>
<td>SCI1 I am very likely to provide the online vendor with the information it needs to better serve my needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SCI2 I am willing to provide my experiences and suggestions when my friends on the social media want my advice on buying something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SCI3 I am willing to buy the products recommended by my friends on the social media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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"YOU ARE KICKED OUT OF THE ROOM NOW!":

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION ON USER-GENERATED CONTENT IN ONLINE COMMUNITIES

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Keywords: social exclusion, user-generated content, online communities, quasi-experiment

Description: This paper investigates how social exclusion, a ubiquitous phenomenon in people’s social lives, affects user-generated content (UGC) production in online communities.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

User-generated content (UGC) production is of key concern to many online communities. Extant work has found that several social factors impact users’ UGC production. Whether and how social exclusion, a ubiquitous phenomenon in people’s social lives, affects UGC production remains inconclusive. Social exclusion is defined as being excluded, rejected, isolated, or ignored by others in social groups. This study investigates the following research questions: First, we look into how social exclusion impacts users’ subsequent UGC frequency in online communities. Second, to understand the possible mechanisms, we investigate how the impact of social exclusion differs across social group characteristics, such as group size and group level.  

Method and Data

We utilized a unique and rich objective dataset from a popular Karaoke singing platform that details 24,998 individual users’ song recording and posting behavior (UGC on this platform), as well as their singing room participation behavior for an eight-week period between June 1, 2019, and July 31, 2019. Our data consists of three parts: users’ behavior information, live streaming information, and users’ demographic information. The data identified one specific kind of social exclusion—being removed from a singing room. This unique information provides us with an ideal setting to empirically investigate the effect of social exclusion on

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1 Many online communities set several levels for social groups based on groups’ activities and group member characteristics. A group with a higher level usually stands for a more prestige and important group.
users’ following UGC behavior on this singing platform.

We used a quasi-experiment to establish the causal relationship. To alleviate the selection bias, we use propensity score matching (PSM) to match the non-excluded users and the excluded users based on their observed individual characteristics. Then, based on the matched sample, we use the difference-in-differences (DID) technique to estimate the causal impact of social exclusion on consumers’ subsequent UGC behavior on the singing platform.

**Summary of Findings**

Our results showed that, on average, a user’s song posting volume decreased by 5.8% after experiencing social exclusion (being removed) from a singing room, thus suggesting that social exclusion vitiated users’ subsequent UGC frequency on the online platform. Furthermore, we found that the negative impact of social exclusion on users’ subsequent UGC frequency was stronger for the singing room from which a user was excluded when the user faced 1) a larger audience size and/or 2) a higher room level.

**Key Contributions**

This research makes several theoretical contributions to the literature on UGC and social exclusion. First, to our knowledge, this study is among the first to recognize social exclusion as an influencing factor of users’ UGC production, which contributes to the UGC literature. Second, our work enriches the social exclusion literature by examining the impact of social exclusion on individuals’ actual behavior using a quasi-experiment in a real online community; most prior investigations have focused on its effects on individuals’ behavioral
intention in a lab setting. Third, most previous social exclusion empiricism has centered on
the consequences of social exclusion in an offline context. We investigate its specific
outcome in the online world—users’ UGC behavior.
Marketing Analytics, AI, Machine Learning
ADVICE AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: WHY AND WHEN TO SEEK ADVICE
FROM HUMANS VERSUS MACHINES

Xianfang Zeng, University of Wisconsin–River Falls

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Keywords: Artificial intelligence, advice, advice seeking, algorithm aversion, algorithm appreciation

Description: This paper reviews research on advice solicitation and artificial intelligence (AI) across multiple areas and outlines a framework that discusses the antecedents of seeking advice from humans versus AI-powered agents.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Due to constant decisions to be made in everyday life, consumers seek advice from many sources such as friends, salespeople, blogs, forums, and social networking sites. The rise and proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI) creates new possibilities for advice seeking. Modern
machines are implemented through trained algorithms to think like humans. In addition to human agents, consumers have AI-powered tools as a second choice of their advice-givers. AI represents an increasingly important source of advice, whereby consumers, as decision makers, interact with virtual agents rather than human advisors. The rapid advances in automated advisors have aroused research about non-human advice. Algorithm aversion and appreciation are two contrasting attitudes toward algorithms (Burton, Stein, and Jensen 2019; Dietvorst, Simmons, and Massey 2015; Logg, Minson, and Moore 2019). Since advice seeking is often the first step of the whole advice system, an exploration about why and when consumers solicit advice from AI versus human agents is fundamental and practically important.

**Method and Data**

We focused on peer-reviewed journal articles that were written in English and published in the fields of management, psychology, information systems, and behavioral economics over the recent 15 years. The relevant databases consist of Academic Search Elite, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, EconLit, ISI Web of Science, JSTOR, ProQuest, PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, SAGE Journals, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis Online, Web of Knowledge, and Wiley Online Library. Although ACM Digital Library and IEEE Xplore Digital Library encompass a wide range of algorithm-related articles, we excluded these two databases because their articles mostly examine algorithmic decision-making from the technical perspective. Since we compare human versus non-human advice, we included articles that involve a comparison between humans and algorithms. The search terms we used are “artificial
intelligence,” “advice seeking,” “algorithmic advice,” “computerized recommender systems,” “recommendation system,” “non-human advice,” “algorithmic decision making,” “human advisors,” “non-human advisors,” and “AI-powered agents.” We finally used a set of 53 empirical papers for our analysis.

**Summary of Findings**

A rich body of scholarly literature investigates (a) advisees’ expectations, perceptions, and lay beliefs and (b) advisors’ (human and non-human) characteristics, qualities, and capabilities. Lay beliefs of AI’s perfect performance and competency (Alvarado-Valencia and Barrero 2014; Longoni and Cian 2020), for the most part, serve as underlying mechanisms behind algorithm aversion. Some misconceptions about AI may be due to laypeople’s displeasure at past irrelevant recommendations as well as unfamiliarity with diversified AI technologies. Would those perception biases toward AI dissipate with some interventions? Previous research articulates a mindful intervention by asking individuals to think about the opposite of what they believed (Longoni and Cian 2020). Other thought-provoking findings are about humanness or anthropomorphism, especially the physical appearance of intelligent machines (e.g., Castelo, Bos, and Lehmann 2019; De Visser et al. 2016). Future research could follow this line but focus on AI-based advice and other aspects of humanness. One understudied aspect of humanness is voice. A machine’s vocal varieties in the pitch, volume, and pace increase one’s likelihood of assigning a humanoid mind to the mindless machine (Schroeder and Epley 2016).
Key Contributions

Our work helps understand the first but critical stage of the whole advice system (that starts from advice seeking, to giving, and then to taking) in the domain of AI. This research also contributes to the burgeoning literature on AI as well as adds insights to the literature about advice.

By reviewing the findings of algorithm aversion versus appreciation, we find some research aspects that should deserve more attention from scholars. Hiring human agents is expensive. Implementing an AI ecosystem within firms, in the beginning, can be also costly. It might be even worse for firms if their consumers respond negatively to AI-based agents. Practically, this paper allows firms to have a big picture of consumers’ reactions to human and non-human advice, and it also provides some hints on how to direct their limited advice resources to the right consumers.

References are available upon request.
CONDUCTING RELEVANT GENERALIZATIONS OF PAST RESULTS IN MARKETING RESEARCH: INTRODUCTION TO THE ONE-STAGE META-ANALYTIC STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELING.

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Keywords

Meta-Analysis, Methodology, MASEM, OSMASEM, Review method

Description

This paper provides a step-by-step tutorial for an innovative method of meta-analysis, of high relevance for marketing research, as it is the most advanced to both quantifying and generalizing the impacts of various variables within a structural model, while considering the effects of contextual settings.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

In this paper, we highlight two specific features of marketing research: (1) a need to model complex marketing phenomena, and (2) to consider contextual effects. To be in line with the discipline's challenges and current practices, it is interesting to have access to generalization methods that can address these two features simultaneously. To understand how marketing research is currently addressing these identified features, we analyzed 127 meta-analyses published in peer-reviewed marketing journals. Our study revealed that only one study is performing a moderation analysis at the level of a structural model (see Saeed et al., 2015). In their meta-analysis the authors employ a sub-group analysis which is an effective method but with important limitations, such as the necessity to have enough data per group. This is a limitation we found in many meta-analyses reviewed here, and some papers reported that they were unable to conduct moderator analyses due to insufficient data. It would therefore be worthwhile to have a comprehensive approach for overcoming these problems, so we addressed the following research question: What meta-analysis method can be used to aggregate past results while satisfying simultaneously the two marketing specific features of structural modeling and contextualization, and how to apply it?

Summary of Findings

We reviewed existing methods to select the most appropriate one to address both features. We could identify several approaches like the univariate meta-analysis, the mixed-effects meta-analysis or meta-regression, the multivariate meta-analysis, the three-levels meta-analysis, the MASEM (Meta-analytic Structural Equation Modeling), the sub-group analysis in MASEM and the OSMASEM (One Stage MASEM). After an in-depth analysis of these methods and exchanges with experts in quantitative psychology, we conclude that the OSMASEM is the most accomplished and comprehensive to address simultaneously the marketing specificities of structural modeling and contextualization. It is a sophisticated method created in 2020 by Jak and Cheung. In their paper they explain the method, its statistical foundations and provide insight on its statistical performance. Here we propose to extend their work by making the protocol explicit and illustrating it with a marketing example to offer a set of good practices to
scholar who might aspire to conduct integrative meta-analyses in the future. We break down the approach into a clear six-step protocol: (1) defining constructs and model specification, (2) building the articles base, (3) specifying the model in R, (4) fitting the model without any moderator, (5) identifying the significant moderators, and (6) drawing conclusions from the analysis.

**Key Contributions**

In this paper we provide an advanced approach to conduct meta-analyses, the OSMASEM, that is particularly relevant to marketing research, since it permits to provide structural models to generalize existing knowledge, while accounting for the contextual differences. Relying on this method that we make more explicit through a clear six-step protocol, we invite researchers to conduct more exhaustive meta-analyses to consolidate research and propose integrative views. We contribute to the advancement of marketing research by adapting an accomplished method of meta-analysis that can help to overcome the limitations observed in existing approaches in marketing. For example, this approach permits to manage missing data when conducting moderator analyses, which is a significant advancement considering the existing heterogeneity between marketing studies. This OSMASEM method was recently created in the Quantitative Psychology discipline, whose aim is to develop quantitative methods to better evaluate human behavior (e.g., SEM, meta-analyses, etc.). It is a very interesting source of knowledge for a discipline like marketing, but its literature is often difficult to access, with more technical terms and insights. We thus intend to create a bridge between the two disciplines by providing a clearer guide to help marketing researchers easily apply it.
DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE AND WELFARE VALUES OF BLOCKCHAIN-BASED SMART CONTRACTS

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Keywords: blockchain, distributive justice, smart contracts, welfare

Description: This article highlights various practical considerations regarding the use of smart contracts and provides a perspective on smart contracts’ mechanisms for implementation of distributive justice and welfare values.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Questions

Due to their newness, various aspects and mechanisms associated with smart contract such as how such contracts actually work, how they should be interpreted by courts, and how they influence transactions and exchange relationship and trust are far from clear (Kshetri, 2021a, b, Kshetri et al., 2021). Thus, there are some well-founded rationales for and against smart contract as well as a number of misinformed and ill guided viewpoints. Moving to the focus of this paper, it can be argued that blockchain-based transparency can discourage unjust conducts. Blockchain-powered smart contracts are likely to reduce the likelihood of accepting poor deals by disadvantaged party. These mechanisms may increase the welfare of disadvantaged groups. In this paper, we seek to address the following question: Will smart contracts contribute to the implementation of distributive justice and welfare values in inter-organizational relationships?

Summary of Findings
Merville and Osborne (1990) observed that best contracts are able to enforce themselves. Looking from this perspective smart contracts could be the best form of contract. Several mechanisms exist that may lead to distributive justice and positive welfare effects of smart contracts. Blockchain-based stand-alone smart contracts, however, lack the key elements of a contract, which may create legal uncertainty about how courts and tribunals will interpret and enforce such contracts. We believe that a mid-level solution would be to use smart contract as a part of a valid and binding natural language contract. In such cases, one or more clauses of a natural language contract are translated into computer code and published to the blockchain.

Key Contributions

In this article we identified, various practical considerations of smart contracts and provided some preliminary assessment regarding smart contracts’ effects on distributive justice and welfare values in inter-organizational relationships.

References

Kshetri, Nir. 2021a. Blockchain and Supply Chain Management. Elsevier: Amsterdam, Netherlands, Oxford, the U.K. and, New York, USA

Kshetri, Nir 2021b."Smart Contracts: Some practical considerations” IEEE IT Professional


THIRTY YEARS OF AI RESEARCH IN MARKETING: A BILIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

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Keywords: artificial intelligence (AI), bibliometrics, co-citation analysis, knowledge structure, VOSviewer

Description: This study examines the knowledge structure of AI research in marketing using bibliometric citation and co-citation method.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Recent marketing literature has pointed out that artificial intelligence (AI), a disruptive
technology and a major source of innovation (Huang & Rust, 2018; Rust & Huang, 2014), is
rapidly changing the business world with machine learning, speech recognition, and natural
language processing (Brock & Wangenheim, 2019; De Ruyter, Keeling, & Yu, 2020). In the
academic field, the fast-growing numbers of publications in the AI literature has made it
difficult to keep track of how this line of research has evolved over time. As AI studies have
grown substantially over the last three decades, now it is the appropriate time to integrate and
reflect on our progress. The following questions guide our study:

1. How AI research in the marketing field has evolved over the last 30 years?
2. Who are the influential authors, articles, and journals guiding AI research in the field of
   marketing?

Method and Data

We employ bibliometric citation and co-citation analyses for this study. The details of the
research steps are as follows. First, following Zupic and Čater (2015)’s protocol, we identify
the appropriate databases and make the selection of needed literature by filtering and
exporting the documents’ bibliometric data. In the current study, the authors create three
sections, namely, selecting database or journal, extracting related articles, and exporting
bibliometric data. Second, to identify leading academic journals, the authors consider those that are rated 3 and above in UK’s Academic Journal Guide by Chartered Association of Business Schools (UK ABS). Articles published in rated 3 and above journals are of certain rigor and peer-reviewed. Third, the authors decide which sections of the output they would scan for the keywords. The authors include articles that are published from 1990 to 2020, as the year 1990 was when AI research has started to gain scholarly attention and momentum. Finally, the authors then go through each of the article’s title and abstract to select articles that are eligible for this study.

Summary of Findings

Our findings show that AI research in marketing domain can be explicated into four sub-themes: online digital marketing, markets and products, brands, and customer service. The core cluster in marketing is online digital marketing, which was probably driven by the use of big data to provide insights on the review of products by online customers. We identified authors who play influential roles in bridging two or more conceptual domains of AI research. The top five journals with most citations are as follows: Journal of Marketing, Marketing Science, International Journal of Research in Marketing, Journal of Consumer Research, and Journal of Retailing. These journals play pivotal roles on AI research in marketing.

Key Contributions
We use bibliometric approaches to identify rising and emerging themes of AI research in the marketing field. To the authors’ knowledge, this is the first few attempts to examine the intellectual structure of AI research using bibliometrics. There is a plethora of studies on AI over the last three decades, the bibliometric investigation helps us identify key authors, articles, and sub-themes to see the driving forces in shaping the discipline. This research could provide valuable information on the developing AI technological trends. The findings of this study shed light on the next AI technology for businesses to adapt to the dynamic and fast-changing global environment.

*References are available upon request.*
WILL WE HELP OTHERS IN A SMART CITY? THE IMPACT OF AI SURVEILLANCE ON CITIZENS' SOCIABILITY

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Keywords: Artificial intelligence, sociability, smart cities, surveillance

Description: The paper investigates the effects of artificial intelligence surveillance technologies on citizens’ sociability and willingness to help.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Across the world, local governments have been investing in building artificial intelligence (AI) systems to increase efficiency and citizens’ well-being. Among those systems, public security technologies (e.g., surveillance cameras and smart robots) have drawn much controversy in press and research publications alike. The use of AI surveillance technologies evokes a technology paradox, pitting an increased sense of safety against a cost in terms of privacy. Despite the growing body of literature on AI’s effects on consumer behavior, there is little evidence on how AI surveillance systems affect how we relate to others. In this study, we address the question how living in a monitored, smart society affect citizens’ behavior towards others. We find that AI surveillance in future smart cities might have both positive and negative effects on sociability. On one hand, citizens might perceive intelligent technology as a bystander able to help if something is wrong. When AI technology is anthropomorphic, citizens might transfer the responsibility to intervene to the technology and help others less. On the other hand, when the technology is not anthropomorphic, citizens may feel evaluated, and increase the likelihood of approaching a person in need. We derive explanations and policy recommendations based on our findings.

Method and Data

To test for the effect of AI surveillance technologies on sociability, we conducted two studies: a multifaceted conjoint study (N = 750, Prolific sample), and an online experiment (N = 1001, Prolific sample). In the conjoint study, we limit concerns about social desirability by asking participants to trade-off among different conditions. In both studies, we operationalized sociability as helping behavior. With the help of a professional designer, we created different scenarios picturing a person laying on the sidewalk. The design was inspired by classical
studies on the bystander effect. The aim of the study was to explore whether and how the presence of different technologies in a smart city context affects people’s social interactions toward other people (i.e. willingness to approach a fallen person). We hypothesized a priori that technology might induce feeling of social presence and the expectation that the “smart system” will help (in a similar way that a police officer would). We also explore how people transfer their responsibility to intervene to the technology. Since most AI applications require the use of some sensor or smart devices collecting the information, we use cameras surveillance and a robot as proxies of AI technologies.

**Summary of Findings**

In the conjoint study, we found that respondents were less likely to approach the fallen person in a smart city than in a city without smart technologies. Interestingly, participants were the least likely to help when a police robot was present (.09, SE=.01, p=.00). This negative effect on the probability of helping is similar to the effect when the police officer was in the picture (.16, SE=.02, p=.00). On the other hand, the respondents were significantly more likely to choose to approach the fallen person when AI surveillance cameras were present than when no surveillance was present (.04, SE=.01, p=.01).

In the experiment, we replicate the finding that citizens are significantly less likely to approach the fallen person when the AI robot (or the police officer) are present, but instead become more likely to intervene when an AI camera is there. A possible explanation for these findings might be that people feel more responsible to intervene when the camera is present and they are more willing to delegate the help to the technology when the robot is present. Overall, our study shows the adverse effects that implementation of AI surveillance technologies can have a social norms and behaviors.
**Key Contributions**

We make several contributions to theory and practice. First, by exploring AI technologies’ potential effects on helping behavior, we respond to recent calls to understand how smart technologies affect future sociability. Second, we contribute to the literature on the effect of smart cities on citizens’ well-being by showing how AI surveillance technologies can have both positive and negative effects on citizens. Finally, we answer the call for more “boundary-breaking” consumer research in two ways. Theoretically, we show the importance of studying how surveillance technologies affect not only private consumers in commercial settings, but also citizens in public settings. Methodologically, we build on previous studies that use a choice-based conjoint approach to reduce social desirability bias and to understand a phenomenon that has many potential drivers. The design allows us to show what citizens might actually do when they make similar choices in future real-world situations. For policy makers, our paper sheds light on consequences of smart city investments on citizen well-being. We show the importance of not only maximizing efficiency from the government side but also of considering citizens’ perspective in new technologies’ development and implementation.
Services, Retailing, and Customer Experience
A META-ANALYTIC REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF SERVICE LEADERSHIP ON CUSTOMER-RELATED OUTCOMES

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Keywords: Leadership, meta-analysis, customer outcomes, frontline employee, service-profit chain

Description: Drawing on the service-profit chain framework and integrating Banks et al.’s (2018) framework of leader behavior, we conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis of service leader behavior (SLB) on customer-related outcomes.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Given the centrality of leadership to the success of the service-profit chain, understanding the relationship between service leader behavior (SLB) and customer-related outcomes has
generated considerable interest among scholars in both service marketing and service management. However, disparate findings from individual studies have led to questions as to the true effect SLB has on customer-related outcomes. Thus, understanding the effects of SLB is of great practical and theoretical interest to service scholars and practitioners. To that point, this project seeks to answer two overarching research questions: “To what extent does service leader behavior matter?”, and if it does matter, “what service leader behavior is most effective in driving customer-related outcomes?”. This research further explores the mediating effects of employee attitudes and behaviors as well as the moderating effects of type of leadership behavior, posing two additional research questions: “Are the relationships between different types of SLB and customer-related outcomes mediated (a) sequentially, (b) parallelly, or (c) partially via service employee attitudes and behaviors?” and “Is the relationship between SLB and customer-related outcomes be moderated by the type of leadership behavior?”.

**Method and Data**

First, we conduct a systematic review of the service literature to determine the extent that the different domains of leadership behavior identified by Banks et al. (2018) have been examined in the service literature. In doing so, we employ meta-analytic techniques to investigate the magnitude of the relationship between SLB and customer outcomes and denote the effects of different categorizations of SLB on service employee attitudes and work behaviors, and ultimately customer-related outcomes. Second, drawing on the service-profit chain framework (Heskett et al. 1994) we employ meta-analytic structural equation modeling (MASEM; Viswesvaran and Ones 1995), employing a series of path analyses, to compare the three most prevalent research designs investigating SLB and customer outcomes via service employee
attitudes and work behaviors (i.e., sequential mediation, parallel mediation, partial mediation).

Finally, subgroup analysis (Hunter and Schmidt 2004) is employed based on coding conducted in the content analysis phase to test the extent to which service-specific leader behavior may serve as a boundary condition that impacts the relationship between SLB and customer-related outcomes.

Summary of Findings

Meta-analytic results suggest the magnitude of the SLB–customer-related outcomes relationship is larger than previously reported due to boundary conditions that impact this relationship. Specifically, while the direct relationship between overall SLB and customer-related outcomes yielded a medium effect, service-specific leader behavior is shown to be twice as consequential as general leader behavior. Results of meta-analytic structural equation modeling suggest overall SLB influences customer-related outcomes both directly and indirectly, thus suggesting the total effect of overall SLB on customer-related outcomes is more than twice the magnitude reported by previous studies. These findings suggest service leaders must lead through words and actions to demonstrate how frontline employee efforts specifically impact customers and drive customer value. Additionally, in using a meta-analytic review methodology, this study provides significant opportunities for researchers as this meta-analysis aggregates knowledge in the field, generates additional insights, and demonstrates potential avenues for future research.

Key Contributions

By conducting a systematic review of the literature pertaining to service leaders’ effects on customer-related outcomes, we provide a bridging mechanism for service thought in
management and marketing, as well as incorporate contributions from other service-related fields such as psychology, education, and nursing. This research can aid industry leaders in service organizations in understanding the differential effects of various types of leadership behavior on customer outcomes. Moreover, the findings from this study build knowledge of how leaders directly and indirectly influence these important customer-related outcomes. In other words, not only does service leader behavior influence customer outcomes directly through leader-customer interactions, but it also has an indirect effect through leaders’ interactions with frontline employees who then interact with customers. Thus, the results of this study highlight the importance of customizing service leader behavior to the service context and modeling appropriate service-specific leadership behavior. Furthermore, given the resource limitations in the workplace, managers likely want to prioritize the specific behaviors that have the greatest impact on customers. Thus, our research provides guidelines as to how they should set up goals and quality standards for service personally and for subordinates.

References are available upon request.
ADDING CLICKS TO CLICKS: EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF ENCROACHMENT ON ONLINE INCUMBENTS

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Keywords:
Channel addition, manufacturer encroachment, online channels, direct selling

Description:
This paper aims to understand the consequences of adding a new webstore by a brand on the brand’s incumbent online channels.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research question
In this research we ask, what is the impact of adding a direct online store on the sales volume, sales revenue, and assortment of goods retailed by online marketplaces governed by indirect channel mechanisms, i.e. third party online retail channels that are configured as (1) agencies and (2) wholesalers.
Method and Data

For this research, we employ a regression discontinuity in time (RDiT) design, a more nuanced version of the classical regression discontinuity design (RDD) and monthly channel sales data from a consumer durables manufacturer with national presence. RDiT designs are RDD designs where the dependent variable is time (Hausman & Rapson, 2018). Many scholars within the marketing scholarship have used RDiT as the key identification tool in their works (Busse et al., 2006; Chen et al., 2009).

Summary of findings

Our analysis shows that online incumbents that utilize both the agency structure and third party structure witness an improvement in sales (measure in terms of volume and value) and assortment of goods sold. These findings are consistent with other channel addition studies such as Avery et al. (2012), Wang & Goldfarb (2017), and Kumar et al. (2019). However, we show that the mechanism through which the increase in sales is brought about may differ significantly.

Key contributions

Theoretically, we offer several novel contributions. First, we are the first to explore a context in which a direct online channel is added to incumbent online channels. In this manner, we expand the extant literature on cross channel effects that focus on understanding the impact of adding ‘clicks to bricks’ (e.g. Deleersnyder et al., 2002; He et al., 2016; Xia & Niu, 2019) and ‘bricks to clicks’ (e.g., Avery et al. 2012; Kumar et al. 2019; K. Wang & Goldfarb, 2017) to contexts in which ‘clicks are added to clicks’. Second, we add to the growing body of work that argues that not all online channels are made the same. In this paper, we argue that there
exists heterogeneity within online channels, and each type of online channel may yield to a different set of outcomes. Last, we add to the growing body of work that explore the impact of new channel addition on assortment, a key but under explored variable of interest for marketing practitioners.

References:


ALWAYS ON MY MIND? – ANTECEDENTS OF PRIVATE LABEL SHARE IN CONSUMERS’ CONSIDERATION SETS

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Keywords: private labels, consideration set, private label attitude, grocery retailing

Description: This study investigates private labels’ importance in pre-purchase situations by examining antecedents of private label share in consumers’ consideration sets.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

This study specifically addresses consideration sets in a private label context, thereby presenting an investigation of private labels’ importance in pre-purchase situations. The formation of consideration sets refers to a simplification strategy during purchase decisions. It describes a category-specific cognitive set that contains consumers’ seriously considered brands. Finally, consumers choose a brand from their consideration set. Thus, consideration set inclusion ultimately arises as a condition for brand choice. The existence of such a decision-making heuristic is established throughout marketing research. However, the retailing and branding landscape has been affected by massive changes, particularly the emergence of private labels. This has not been recognized in literature on consideration sets. Private labels’ popularity and success is often analyzed by shares of actual purchases. In contrast, we focus on the pre-purchase stage and therefore rely on the share of private labels in consideration sets to measure private labels’ importance in consumers’ minds. In addition
to a comparison with actual volume shares, reasons for private label consideration and ultimately influential factors of private label share in consideration sets are of particular interest. This concludes in the following research question: What are the antecedents of the private label share in consumers’ consideration sets?

**Method and Data**

We designed an online questionnaire to measure private label share in consumers’ consideration sets via aided-recall approach. Data about five different product categories in grocery retailing, including both food- and non-food categories, was collected. Furthermore, we aimed at a comprehensive understanding of grocery assortments by including private labels of different quality tiers. In addition, we addressed disparity in grocery retailing by using assortments of both a traditional supermarket and a discounter. This approach allowed us to compute overall private label shares across multiple categories. In the course of literature review we identified four potential antecedents of private label share, namely private label attitude, price consciousness, value consciousness, and risk of private labels. Those were measured on seven-point Likert-scales with items adopted from previous studies. Distribution via convenience sampling technique produced a final sample size of 281 participants (65.6% = female; mean age = 38.1). We examined the research model and corresponding hypotheses via structural equation modeling, using partial least squares analysis.

**Summary of Findings**

We identified average private label shares in consideration sets of approximately 39% across five product categories. This implicates that private labels take up similar space in consumers’ minds, as in consumers’ grocery shopping baskets, where shares between 30% and 50% have been reported across the majority of European countries. Furthermore, all hypothesized antecedents of private label share in consumers’ consideration sets proved to be significant.
Structural equation modeling supported the hypothesized positive influence of private label attitude on private label share ($\beta = .222$, $t = 4.193$, $p < .001$). Additionally, significant positive effects of price consciousness ($\beta = .283$, $t = 4.846$, $p < .001$) and value consciousness ($\beta = .128$, $t = 2.196$, $p < .050$) on private label attitude were found, whereas perceived risk of private labels ($\beta = -.434$, $t = 8.530$, $p < .001$) negatively impacted private label attitude. In summary, we discover private label attitude as the main antecedent of private label share in consideration sets. Besides price consciousness, value consciousness and risk of private labels emerge, as they influence private label attitude.

**Key Contributions**

Our study offers multiple academic and managerial contributions. First, it enriches extant literature on private labels by examining their importance in consumers’ minds in a novel manner. More specifically, we also extend literature on consideration sets by scrutinizing private label shares in consumers’ consideration sets. Our research further provides reasons for private label consideration in pre-purchase situations. Precisely, we present antecedents of private label share in consideration sets, which offers researchers a more nuanced understanding of consumers’ decision-making processes in a private label context.

Furthermore, our findings provide managers of both private labels and national brands with valuable insights into consumers’ brand considerations. In times where retailers are introducing a variety of premium private labels, our results show that price and value perceptions still matter to private label buyers, while perceived risk remains an issue. Therefore, communication efforts on strengthening consumers’ quality perceptions of private labels should be further intensified by retailers. Lastly, managers of national brands should be on alert, as our study indicates that private labels are not only gaining shares in consumers’ shopping baskets but also in consumers’ minds.

*References are available upon request.*
ANTECEDENTS TO EMOTIONAL MOTIVATORS FOR GREEN CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOR

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Keywords: Green, emotions, hedonic, purchase intentions

Description: This research explores antecedents to emotional motivators for green purchase intentions.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Past research has shown a connection between a service’s green features and consumption behavior (Chen 2013; Hur, Kim and Park 2013, Kwon, Englis and Mann 2016; Koller, Floh and Zauner 2011). Green features motivate buying behavior if these features instill some “feel good” emotions in the consumer. These “feel good” emotions then trigger the consumption (Pérez and Bosque 2015; Andrews, Luo, Fang and Aspara 2014; Leisen Pollack 2021). The present research adds to this stream of investigations into such emotional motivators. It identifies and tests two categories of antecedents to such emotional motivators in the services industry. The first category represents customer characteristics and includes green consumption values and gender. The second category reflects service characteristics. It includes the consumer’s assessments of the greenness of the service and the hedonic content of the service.

Method and Data
The data for empirically addressing the research question were collected from a convenience sample. The participants were asked to complete an online self-administered questionnaire. Pooled across two service scenarios (i.e., a wine tasting and a banking scenario), 256 observations were analyzed. A scale was developed for the emotional motivators. For the other variables, existing published scales were adapted. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis and Cronbach alpha analysis showed adequate support for the measurement model.

**Summary of Findings**

The hypotheses were tested using structural equation modelling. The results reaffirm that the emotional motivators positively affect consumption intentions. The results also affirm that green consumption values positively affect consumption intentions. Green consumption values positively affect the emotional motivators. Gender affects the emotional motivators. Females show a more positive connection. Perceptions of service greenness positively affect the emotional motivators. Services higher in hedonic content display a more positive relationship.

The overall fit for the hypothesized model is mixed, indicating that some additional model paths are plausible. For instance, it is conceivable that purchase behavior reinforces the emotions and green values. This would indicate a more circular relationship between green consumption behavior, green values and emotions with one reinforcing the others.

**Key Contributions**

The findings reaffirm that the green features of a service can encourage purchase behaviors and that emotional motivators are the means for connecting the two constructs. It distills high impact emotional motivators for green consumption behaviors and tests their impact on purchase
intentions. This research expands theory by proposing two antecedent groups to these high impact motivating emotions: customer characteristics and product/service characteristics. The findings have implication for promotional messaging. Service organizations can promote the adoption of environmentally friendly initiatives to evoke these emotions. The findings suggest that the positive emotions evoked by service greenness are stronger for females and for consumers with more pronounce green consumption values. It follows that females and more environmentally concerned consumers may be attractive target markets for service organizations wanting to highlight their green initiatives.

References available upon request.
Attitude Formation Toward Economy, Standard and Premium Private Label

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Keywords: Private Label, Store Brands, Brand Attitude, Store Atmosphere, Store Attitude

Description: In an online experiment, we investigate the impact of retailer characteristics, namely store atmosphere and retailers' price positioning, on attitude formation of individual Private Labels through the mediator store attitude.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Private Labels (PLs) are brands. Most Western retailers have multi-tier PL portfolios consisting of economy, standard, and premium PL. Yet, brand management of PLs received relatively little attention from academic researchers in the past. Also, the perceived quality gap between PLs and national brands (NBs) is converging. In mature markets, PLs can be on par or even better than NBs. In some countries, PLs are even the innovation leaders (in specific product categories).
However, academic research often still focuses on perceived quality as a major driver of PL purchase intentions while other factors, such as attitude towards the individual PL, might have become (more) relevant.

In this project, we investigate attitude formation toward a retailer's individual PLs. Previous studies only investigated consumers' general attitude toward all PLs of all retailers in the market. We investigate consumers' attitude toward a specific PL of a single retailer. Since retailers have different strategic options compared to manufacturers for creating affect toward their brands, brand attitude formation is likely to differ for PLs vis-à-vis NBs. We identify two main retailer characteristics, namely store atmosphere and retailers' price positioning, and investigate their impact on consumers' attitude towards individual PLs of a specific retailer via the mediator attitude toward the retailer.

**Method and Data**

To test our hypotheses, we conducted an online experiment with a 2 x 2 between-subjects design. Factor 1 manipulated the store atmosphere (unpleasant vs. pleasant), and factor 2 manipulated the retailer's price positioning (low vs. high). Respondents were recruited in Switzerland via social networks such as LinkedIn and Facebook (n = 174) and randomly assigned to one of the four experimental groups.

Subjects were invited to participate in a survey about a new retailer. In the online questionnaire, participants faced a fictitious scenario that informed them about the market entry of a new retailer called "Aebischer". The scenario also announced that this retailer has three PL in its portfolio: Aebischer Basic, Aebischer Every Day Value, and Aebischer Premium. The subbrand names were inspired by what European retailers typically use to brand their economy, standard, and premium PL. After informing the subjects about the new retailer, the survey continued with a
description of the focal retailer's typical store. The scenario manipulated the store atmosphere (narrow/wide floors, cold/warm lights, prominent/discrete display of prices and promotions, old-fashioned/contemporary colors, and decoration, usually/always cleaned) and retailer's price positioning (store focuses on low prices/quality and service) depending on the experimental group. After the scenario, the online questionnaire continued with questions for all relevant measures.

Summary of Findings

Manipulation checks indicate that all our manipulations have been successful. Also, reported perceived quality scores of the three PL indicate that subjects assumed different quality levels for each PL as we intended. To test our hypotheses, we conducted mediation analyses (Model 8) using the Process macro. We find a significant positive impact of store atmosphere on attitude toward the retailer and from attitude toward the retailer on attitude toward the retailer's economy, standard, and premium PL. Bootstrapping (5000 samples) indicates that the indirect effect is significant for all three PL quality-tiers. We do not find any significant direct effect of store atmosphere on any PL-tier. Also, we do not find a significant moderation by retailer's price positioning for any PL-tier. Hence, for all PL tiers, the mediation is indirect-only. We conclude that store atmosphere affects consumers' attitude toward a retailer, which affects consumers' attitude toward a retailer's economy, standard, and premium PL.

Key Contributions

Our results show that store atmosphere can increase attitude toward a retailer's individual PLs via the mediator attitude toward the retailer. In the case of all three PL quality-tiers tested, we find an indirect-only mediation. Store atmosphere has no significant direct effect on attitude toward the retailers' individual economy, standard, and premium PL. Retailers' price positioning does not
moderate the positive effect of store atmosphere on attitude toward the retailer or attitude toward a retailer's individual PLs. According to our findings, one way to increase attitude toward individual PLs of a retailer is to increase attitude toward the retailer itself, for instance, by increasing the pleasantness of the stores' environment. Further research is required to improve our understanding of consumers' affect toward individual PL and potential behavioral consequences.

References are available on request.
BUSINESS CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IN B2B2C: A SCALE DEVELOPMENT

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Keywords: Business customer experience, B2B2C, aggregator business models, scale development

Description: The research attempts to develop a scale for business customer experience in the merging B2B2C aggregator business model.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The business customer experience (BCX) is core to B2B relationship marketing. In B2B2C business models, where a business entity receives products or services from another business entity for serving its retail customers, the quality of relationship among B2B partners significantly determines the end customer experience. Typically, in a B2B2C trilogy, a business serves its customers through the support of services from another business firm. For example, in the case of online food ordering and delivery services, the restaurant reaches out to its customers through the support of digital applications developed by aggregator companies as in the case of Uber eats, Zomato etc. In B2B2C arrangements, through temporal or permanent partnerships, a business allows the involvement of another business to simplify its operations and ensure the end customer experience. Considerable deliberations in the extant literature about customer experience pertains to retail customers and their reflections about memorable outcomes from a product or service encounter. Even though the concept is different in the application for a business customer, it is equally relevant and has a significant role in the success of B2B2C relationships and end-customer experience. Therefore, empirical investigations offering insights about BCX in B2B relationships and its dimensions have multiple implications to offer in the context of aggregator business models.

Literature defines customer experience as a personal feeling evoked out of customer interactions with a business’s offerings and implies customer involvement at different levels (rational, emotional, sensorial, physical, and spiritual) of sense-making (Schmitt,1999). The relationship among B2B partners is rooted in the common objective of higher value creation for both parties. Every business must maintain its B2B relationships since it predicts favourable outcomes such as loyalty, referrals, partnering, and B2B engagement (Arlt et al.,2018). The understanding of the intricacies in the formation of BCX in the B2B2C context is scant in literature. The growth of hyperlocal e-commerce business models, which focuses on target customers in a limited geographical area, depends heavily on another business to handle the supply chain operations through real-time information sharing using digital platforms (Singh and Keating,2018). These emerging trends offer justifications to empirically examine the phenomenon of BCX in B2B2C service models.

Research Question

1. What are the factors of BCX in the B2B2C context?
2. How to develop a valid and reliable instrument to measure BCX?
3. Whether the BCX affect B2B satisfaction?

**Method and Data**

Based on the scale development procedure proposed by Churchill (1979, we have conducted a literature review and expert discussions for item generation. An extensive literature search helped to identify a total number of 165 items about different themes such as B2B service quality, relationship quality, operational excellence, value creation, support systems, information quality, procedural quality, timeliness, technical support, end-customer experience satisfaction, hedonic elements, and cost. Next, a panel of six experts reviewed this initial item pool and after deleting the non-contextual and overlapping items, retained 92 items. Additionally, the panel suggested the inclusion of 12 contextually relevant items from their practical experience after a detailed discussion. Subsequently, we requested the experts to classify the items on a three-point scale “most relevant” to “least relevant” and 46 items for which the majority of the experts' rated as most important were included for final testing (Lin and Hsieh, 2011). We have framed these items into statements, which were content validated through the same panel of experts and administered a pilot testing among thirty B2B managers. According to their suggestions, few statements were re-phrased. The scaling used at this stage was 1-“least important predictor of BCX” to 5-“most important predictor of BCX”. The items with means less than 3 standard deviations more than 2 were further removed to finally consider 38 items in the scale development.

For refinement of the scale, we performed data quality assessments, item analysis, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The scale had no validity and reliability concerns confirming the factor structure. To further validate, the scale by checking the nomological validity by examining the relationship with a theoretically related variable, i.e B2B satisfaction. The structural equation model linking BCX construct and B2B satisfaction emerged as a well-fit one even though fit criteria become slightly inferior. We observed that one item in the B2B satisfaction battery was having high cross-loading with one of the items related to RE, which we removed for a better fit. Thus, we observed that a 32 item, six-factor scale is a better measure for BCX in a B2B2C context.

**Summary of Findings**

The six dimensions were named as collaboration experience, interaction experience, end-customer focussed experience, relationship experience, service experience, and outcome-based experience. The observations from the item selection process, clearly indicate that BCX is more objective in nature and end beliefs about customer experience is a major component. Two CFA’s conducted to decide the best structure of BCX construct among two theoretically justifiable conceptualizations such as (1) higher-order reflective with first-order reflective dimensions and (2) higher-order formative with first-order reflective dimensions, revealed better fit exists for a higher-order formative structure and that all the dimensions had significant loading with the higher-order construct of BCX. Thus, our study concludes that BCX in the B2B2C context is more grounded in business commitments and end-user related outcomes.

**Key Contributions**

This study has a few theoretical and managerial contributions. First, a validated scale for BCX in the B2B2C triadic relationship and the dimensions identified offer insights to explore the
business customer priorities in the emerging hyperlocal aggregator business models. Second, the observations offer a new direction to define the service-dominant logic in business mediated service value creation. Third, the role of B2B is increasing in a connected world of service delivery, and hence extending the principles of transformative service research to the business customer is assuming significance. Fourth, the validated scale guide service designers to clearly define service operations, to describe the role of each B2B partner in service design, and to understand the sensitiveness of touchpoints related to business partner for service failure for a better outcome. In the practical front, our scale will help practitioners identify important areas of strategic attention required for lasting B2B relationships. Additionally, help business organizations to plan operations, resources mobilizations, capacity building, skill acquisitions, technology support etc required to deliver unmatching BCX. Future studies comparing dyadic perspectives of BCX will be contributing.

References will be provided upon request.
CLICK-AND-COLLECT WITH IMPULSE BUYING: PRICING DECISIONS AND THE CHOICE OF PICKUP STATION

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Keywords: click-and-collect (C&C), consumer deliberation, omni-channel marketing, impulse buying, physical retailer.

Description: This paper shows that the click-and-collect (C&C) format (aka the BOPS format) alleviates retail competition and helps induce consumer deliberation and reduce impulse buying, and in-store pickup and curbside pickup may each become optimal in various scenarios.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question: Brick-and-mortar retailers have come to realize the need to integrate all existing channels (omni-channel retailing) to provide customers with a seamless shopping experience (Bell et al. 2014; Gao and Su 2017, Gielens et al. 2020), and allowing customers to buy online and pick up in store (BOPS, aka the click-and-collect format, C&C) appears to be the most important omni-channel tactic (Forrester Research 2014). Gielens et al. (2020) classify pickup choices of C&C into the \textit{in-store}, the \textit{curbside}, and the
free standing pickup. In France, E. Leclerc, the second-largest French retailer, has adopted both the curbside and free standing types of C&C, but passed on the in-store type. Intermarché, the third-largest French retailer, by contrast, has adopted the in-store and curbside types of C&C, but has abandoned the free standing type. This paper answers the following enquiries: Why is C&C mostly offered for free? Does C&C promote or mitigate retail competition? Does C&C encourage impulse buying? Why is one choice of pickup station better than another?

**Summary of Findings:** Without C&C the high hassle costs of shopping promote one-stop shopping, resulting in physical retailers competing in a winner-takes-all manner and adopting both the EDLP (everyday-low-price) and loss-leader pricing formats in equilibrium, which discourages consumer deliberation and leads to much impulse buying. When C&C uniformly reduces the hassle costs of shopping retailers would compete in a category-by-category manner, leading to an asymmetric pricing equilibrium for each category, in which one retailer would price higher than its rival to induce consumer deliberation, thereby removing impulse buying totally. The introduction of C&C can be Pareto improving, making retailers and consumers better off. In-store pickup generally dominates curbside pickup in this scenario. When consumers differ in demand intensity and light users dominate the market, a retailer may prefer curbside pickup to in-store pickup when C&C reduces more hassle costs for heavy users than for light users.
Statement of Key Contributions: This paper clarifies the strategic role of C&C for competitive retailers, and shows that the three choices of pickup station can respectively be optimal in different contexts. Our findings render useful insights to marketers that wish to perform C&C in a competitive retail industry.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Contactless Retail: Implications of Reshaped Shopping Journey and Roles of Stores

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Research Question

In recent years, consumer shopping has been substantially reshaped by innovative technologies, a shift which has been accelerated by COVID-19. We coined the term contactless retail to describe consumers’ changing preference for convenience and limited direct contact between retailers and consumers. This paper articulates the concept of contactless retail and describe the stages of contactless shopping, as compared with traditional shopping, at a physical store: entering the store, information acquisition, product evaluation, purchase/checkout, and product acquisition.

Method and Data

Since this is a conceptual paper, there is no data associated yet. We, however, provide examples of each stage and related research questions. For instance, when entering a contactless store, consumers need to verify their identity using mobile/palm/QR codes. Information search involves AR-embedded product labels and blockchain. Products can be evaluated using AR views and AI-shopping assistants. For purchase/checkout, consumers can use automated checkouts and smart shopping carts. At the product acquisition stage, consumers increasingly prefer to use curbside pickup and treat the store as a showroom. Drone and robot delivery allow both convenience and safe and clean shopping.
Key Contributions

This paper sheds lights on important future questions for academics and practitioners include whether, when, and how consumers react to, cope with, or proactively request contactless retail; whether such shifts will persist after COVID-19; and how dynamics may change across different stages of the shopping journey. Such changes also yield transformative roles of physical stores. We provide insights into contactless retail and related research questions that will contribute to the literature and benefit practitioners.

Keyword: contactless retail, shopping journey, physical retail, retail technology
DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AND SHOPPING: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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Keywords: Artificial intelligence; augmented reality; digital technologies; virtual reality; consumer behavior.

Description: This paper identifies and measures the unique attributes of digital technologies (DTs) and explores their impact on five stages of consumer decision making process in shopping using a review of the current literature and online survey-based study.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Questions

We address the following research questions:

1. What are the unique attributes of various digital technologies (Artificial Intelligence, Augmented, Mixed, Virtual Reality, Internet, Mobile Platform)?

2. What are the commonalities and differences in the scores for these attributes across all the digital technologies?

3. What is the impact of these attributes of digital technologies and the consumers’ demographic and behavioral characteristics on their shopping experience, choice and usage as well as on the five stages of consumer decision-making process (i.e., (awareness, interest, search, action, and sharing from pre- to post transaction)?)
Method and Data

We conducted an online survey with a sample of MTurk panel members in the US (N=300) using a between-subjects design with 50 participants and a structured questionnaire with the level of familiarity, usage, and satisfaction as well as the perceived attributes, benefits, choice, and usage of six digital technologies. We collected their demographic data to classify their responses. Our sample had the following descriptive statistics: males (71%); age under 44 years (77%); full-time employees (89%); white collar workers (61%); well educated (bachelors and above) (91%); higher income (above $25,000 per annum) (84%); frequent internet users (4 hours and above every day) (72%). We ran an exploratory factor analysis (EFA). It revealed eight dimensions of the digital technology attributes (utilitarian, hedonic, entertainment, performance, perceived risk, versatility, virtualization, human-like) using 69 items identified from our extensive literature review. In addition, we measured the five stages of consumer decision-making (i.e., awareness, interest, search, action, and sharing from pre- to post transaction) using two items each. Finally, we measured three important customer outcomes, including customer experience (efficiency and enjoyment), customer choice and future usage. All the items have high loadings (> .70) on their respective factors, showing convergent validity.

Summary of Findings

The participants’ future usage is driven by the performance (β = .22, p < .001), versatility (β = .14, p < .05), and choice (β = .37, p < .001). Need recognition is influenced by the utilitarian (β = .37, p < .001) attribute of DTs, whereas information search is affected by familiarity with DTs (β = .16, p < .001), utilitarian attribute (β = .38, p < .001) and need recognition (β = .12, p < .05). Alternative evaluation is influenced by performance attribute (β = .36, p < .001) and need recognition (β = .13, p < .05), whereas purchase behavior is driven by independence (β = .27, p < .001), information search (β = .15, p < .05) and alternative evaluation (β = .17, p
Post-purchase behavior is influenced by utilitarian ($\beta = .33, p < .001$), independence ($\beta = .24, p < .01$), performance ($\beta = .20, p < .05$), versatility ($\beta = .17, p < .05$), enjoyment dimension of customer experience ($\beta = .37, p < .001$), recognition ($\beta = .19, p < .001$) and information search ($\beta = .20, p < .001$). AISAS has a non-linear nature with a positive effect of Share on Attention (H1: $\beta = .173, t = 2.7, p < .01$).

**Key Contributions**

This paper that examines the impact of digital technologies on the consumer decision-making process has both theoretical and managerial contribution. The theoretical contributions are: (1) The attributes of six digital technologies are conceptualized as a multidimensional construct; (2) The new conceptual model depicts the impact of these attributes on consumers’ shopping experience; (3) The impact of the unique attributes of digital technologies and the participants’ demographic and behavioral characteristics on consumer decision-making process are examined (i.e., pre- to post-purchase); (4) The consumer decision journey, represented with AISAS model (Awareness, Interest, Search, Action, and Sharing), is proven to be no longer linear with the confirmed path from sharing to attention. From a managerial point of view, the results provide useful insights on how consumers perceive digital technologies and how these technologies impact consumer decision making, shedding light to businesses which approach to customers at various touchpoints through digital technologies. The managerial implications are: (1) The circular nature of the AISAS model signals businesses that use of digital technologies is likely to lead to repeat purchase, constituting a further route to loyalty; (3) Businesses can encourage customers’ use of digital technologies which would help close off competitors’ opportunities and build repeat business.

**Note:** References are available upon request.
DO WE TRUST AI-BASED SERVICES USING CHATBOTS? THE ROLE OF ANTHROPOMORPHIC DESIGN

Statement of Key Contributions

With unprecedented mega-disruptions in service industries caused by COVID-19, more than two-thirds of the top global financial service firms have launched or are piloting chatbots to deal with the new reality where direct human contact is no longer feasible. Given that chatbot service is an emerging technology, our current understanding is still limited when it comes to consumers’ adoption of financial services using chatbots. This paper argues that anthropomorphic designs (or human-likeness) for chatbots increase consumers’ trust and perceived usefulness, which ultimately increases their adoption of using the mobile app. Overall, we believe that our findings offer both theoretical and managerial implications.

Extended Abstract

Research Question

Consumers’ adoption of AI-based chatbots is identified as one of the major technological innovations that will revolutionize the way customers interact with firms across many business sectors (Grewal et al., 2020). Recently, the force of this digital transformation was accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The infectious disease caused major disruptions to the service industry as lockdowns were enforced and direct customer contact was discouraged (Kabadayi et al., 2020). Like many service sectors trying to adapt to the new reality quickly, the banking sector has been compressing years of digital transformation plans into a matter of months, with the deployment of chatbots playing a vital role (Kekevi, 2020). More than two-thirds of the top global financial service firms have launched or are piloting chatbots (L'Hostis, 2020).

Following this trend, an urgent call has begun to raise understanding as to how consumers adopt chatbot services amid the influence of COVID-19 (Blut et al., 2021; Verma et al., 2020). However, given that COVID-19 is a new issue, little is known about how consumers perceive and react to such services under the changed circumstances. To fill this gap, our research question starts from here: How can we increase consumers’ intention to use mobile financial apps providing chatbot services more so we can lower the number of direct human contacts in the COVID-19 era?

To answer the above research question, this paper focuses on the role of anthropomorphic chatbots. Anthropomorphism is the act of imbuing nonhuman agents with human-like characteristics (Epley et al., 2007). The literature has shown that anthropomorphism in chatbot design is an antecedent of trust (van Pinxteren et al., 2019) and adoption intent (Blut et al., 2021; Sheehan et al., 2020) toward the service of AI-based agents. We assume that COVID-19 caused individuals to have a higher motivation for searching for human warmth from the chatbots’ anthropomorphic features. We concur with prior research that the
perceived human-likeness of anthropomorphic chatbots will increase consumers’ intentions to adopt that mobile service.

In addition, we expect a mediating role of trust between the perceived human-likeness and the behavioral intention to adopt mobile financial apps. Trust has been understood as the backbone of the financial industry (Slade et al., 2015; Gao et al., 2017; Bustamante et al., 2019) and serves a positive role in increasing consumers’ adoption of robotic and chatbot services (Fernandes et al., 2021; van Pinxteren et al., 2019; Hildebrand et al., 2020). However, a lack of personal feelings and empathy poses an impediment to consumers’ trust in AI-based services, resulting in pushbacks of the service (Putoni et al., 2021; Luo et al., 2019). Thus, we expect consumers to trust chatbots with anthropomorphic designs, as they perceive a higher level of human-likeness, increasing their adoption intent.

Moreover, this paper examines the role of perceived usefulness. Davis (1989) defined perceived usefulness as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance.” The literature has introduced this construct to explain consumers’ adoption of mobile banking apps and confirmed that consumers’ perceived usefulness of the apps has a positive direct impact on the adoption (Veríssimo et al., 2016). Accordingly, we expect that the perceived usefulness of chatbot services will mediate the relationship between trust and adoption. That is, to the extent consumers find chatbots trustworthy, they are more likely to perceive the chatbots’ recommendations to be helpful, which ultimately increases consumers’ intention to adopt the mobile app.

Analysis and Results

We collected responses from 223 individuals from the US. About 60% of them were male, and their ages ranged from 23 to 71 years old.

The dataset was analyzed with SPSS 21.0. We conducted a reliability analysis on the measurement items. There were four items from the anthropomorphic design of chatbots, five items from the behavioral intention to adopt the app, three items from the trust, and six items from perceived usefulness. Trust and perceived usefulness were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree, 7: strongly agree), and the rest were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree, 5: strongly agree). All the constructs had a Cronbach’s alpha (α) above the suggested minimum of 0.70.

Then, we used Model 6 in the PROCESS macro for SPSS using a 5,000-bootstrapping method with a 95% confidence interval (Hayes, 2017). The results showed a significant indirect effect with the 95% confidence interval excluding zero ($\beta = 0.152; \text{CI} = 0.043 - 0.278$). Specifically, the regression from anthropomorphic design to trust was significant ($\beta = 0.792; p < 0.001$). The regression from trust to perceived usefulness was significant ($\beta = 0.490; p < 0.001$). Also, the regression from perceived usefulness to adoption intention was significant ($\beta = 0.392; p < 0.001$). Thus, the sequential mediation was significant.

Summary of Findings and Key Contributions

Our analysis confirmed our hypothesis that, under COVID-19, individuals perceive a higher degree of human-likeness from anthropomorphic chatbots, resulting in higher adoption intent of the apps. Moreover, our results confirmed the sequential mediation of trust and perceived
usefulness on the relationship between perceived human-likeness of anthropomorphic chatbots and adoption intent of the mobile financial app.

This empirical investigation provides both theoretical and managerial implications. While the existing literature has shown a long-standing endeavor and research progress, our study shows that the extent of human-likeness consumers perceive from anthropomorphic chatbots can increase their intention to adopt financial apps with these chatbot services. To decision-makers in the banking sector, the positive relationships imply that the negative emotions derived from the COVID-19 situation have made consumers more willing to accept financial chatbots and financial apps, representing market opportunities for expanding digital financial services via mobile devices.

Moreover, the sequential mediation of trust and perceived usefulness provides managerial insights into financial chatbots’ design and functionality. Our study has highlighted anthropomorphic design as an important aspect that facilitates trust, perceived usefulness, and adoption intent. Thus, we highly suggest financial firms improve the consumer experience on mobile devices by providing chatbot interactions with a sense of human warmth.

Selected References


FEELING REWARDED AND ENTITLED TO BE SERVED: UNDERSTANDING THE INFLUENCE OF REGULAR VERSUS SELF-CHECKOUT ON CUSTOMER SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

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Keywords: self-service technology, self-checkout, retail shopping experience, customer entitlement

Description

Through five studies, the authors demonstrate that regular (vs. self-) checkout service makes customers feel more rewarded, more satisfied with their shopping outcomes, and more likely to return to the store.
Research Question

Retailers have been adopting a variety of self-service technologies (SSTs) (Orel and Kara, 2014) in recent years, among which, self-checkout systems are one of the most popular services. Self-checkout systems clearly save overhead costs for companies and make the checkout process more efficient. Although the benefits of employing self-checkout have been discussed extensively in both academia and industry, the pitfalls are rather understudied. In other words, would self-checkout service be always more beneficial for retailers than regular checkout? In this project, we investigate how self-checkout (vs. regular checkout) service influences customer perception of their shopping outcomes.

We propose that self-checkout (vs. regular checkout) systems, would make customers feel less rewarded and less satisfied with their purchases. There are two reasons underlying our proposition. First, we argue that the extra effort involved in self-checkout negates customers’ perceived rewards. During self-checkout, consumers have to do extra work by scanning, bagging, and making payment by themselves. Oliver and Swan (1989) demonstrated that in an equitable exchange, the more effort individuals exert, the more outcome they expect in return. Also, according to effort discounting theory, the subjective value of reward decreases as the effort exerted to obtain that reward increases (Ostaszewski et al., 2013). Therefore, engaging in self-checkout may increase customer expectation of rewards, and therefore negatively impact their perception of received reward and overall satisfaction. The second reason underlying our proposition is customer entitlement. During self-checkout, the extra works customers perform might trigger their sense of entitlement which may have a negative impact on shopping outcomes. An entitled customer perceives himself or herself to be a special customer of the firm (Boyd & Helms, 2005) and expects special treatment without equivalent effort on their part (Fisk and Neville, 2011). When customers check out by themselves instead of being served, the triggered entitlement could negatively impact their perceived reward and other shopping outcomes. We conducted three studies to test our hypothesis.

Method and Data

Study 1 (Mturk, N = 279) was correlational where participants indicated which checkout system they used in their most recent grocery shopping trip, and answered questions about their experience during that shopping trip. It was found that compared to self-checkout customers, customers who used regular checkout felt more rewarded by their savings ($M_{\text{regular}} = 4.69$ vs. $M_{\text{self}} = 4.24$; $p < .05$), and believed that they were treated as a more valuable customer by the store ($M_{\text{regular}} = 5.79$ vs. $M_{\text{self}} = 5.37$; $p < .01$). There was also preliminary evidence of the process of the effect where regular checkout customers thought (more than self-checkout customers) that the extra work involved in self-checkout process offsets the value they received from shopping ($M_{\text{regular}} = 3.77$ vs. $M_{\text{self}} = 3.04$; $p < .01$).
In Study 2 (N = 180), we manipulated checkout style by randomly assigning undergraduate students to imagine using either regular or self-checkout during a grocery shopping trip. Participants were told that they received rewards and made some savings during this shopping trip where they purchased 15 items. We showed them a screen displaying the price of some of the items and the savings they made. We subsequently asked about their shopping experience. We replicated the effects from Study 1 and found that regular checkout customers felt more rewarded by their savings (M<sub>regular</sub> = 4.35 vs. M<sub>self</sub> = 3.94; p < .01), and were more willing to come back to the store (M<sub>regular</sub> = 5.13 vs. M<sub>self</sub> = 4.33; p < .01) compared to self-checkout customers.

We conducted Study 3 during the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of this study is twofold. The first is to see whether the effect persists given that consumers’ grocery shopping behavior changed a lot during the pandemic. The second is to examine the mechanisms underlying the checkout type effect. Two hundred and forty MTurk participants were randomly assigned to imagine going for grocery shopping during the pandemic and using either regular or self-checkout. We asked the participants about their shopping experience as in Study 2. We also measured the underlying process by asking them to what extent they think they received the service they think they deserved and were entitled to, and how much effort they think they saved during the checkout process. We first replicated the main effects of previous studies and found that regular checkout (vs. self-checkout) customers felt more rewarded, (M<sub>regular</sub> = 5.28 vs. M<sub>self</sub> = 4.87; p < .05), were more willing to come back to the store (M<sub>regular</sub> = 6.01 vs. M<sub>self</sub> = 5.73; p < .05), and thought they were treated as a more valuable customer (M<sub>regular</sub> = 5.39 vs. M<sub>self</sub> = 4.98; p < .01). We also found that customers’ sense of entitlement to be served, and perception of how much effort they saved during the checkout process parallely mediate these main effects. The conditional indirect effects show that self-checkout (vs. regular checkout) had a negative indirect effect on how much rewarded the participants felt through entitlement (ab = -0.39, SE = 0.09, CI.95 = -0.64, -0.19) and perceived saved effort (ab = -0.24, SE = 0.09, CI.95 = -0.42, -0.75). We also found similar negative indirect effects through entitlement and perceived saved effort on participants’ willingness to come back to the store (entitlement: ab = -0.47, SE = 0.09, CI.95 = -0.67, -0.29; perceived saved effort: ab = -0.12, SE = 0.06, CI.95 = -0.24, -0.01), and how much customers think they were treated as a valuable customer (entitlement: ab = -0.42, SE = 0.09, CI.95 = -0.62, -0.26; perceived saved effort: ab = -0.24, SE = 0.07, CI.95 = -0.38, -0.12).

**Summary of Findings**

In summary, we found that customers using self-checkout (vs. regular checkout) feel less rewarded, feel to a less extent that they are treated as a valuable customer, and are less likely to return to the store. These effects are caused by perceived customer entitlement and the extra effort involved in self-checkout. In the future, we want to further explore the mediation and other moderating processes involved in our effects.

**Theory and Contribution**
This research is important for both theory and practice. This study is a unique addition to the body of retail shopping literature, as it compares self- and regular checkout systematically to determine how they affect customer experiences differently. Our findings also have implications for retailers in terms of how to manage their checkout systems to ensure positive customer experiences. Specifically, at a time when many retail chains (e.g., Home Depot, Walmart) are installing or expanding self-service checkouts, others are removing them. Our findings should help retailers resolve some of these dilemmas. Although the selection and efficiency of using different checkout systems often depend on basket size, we demonstrate that for a size suitable for both self- and regular checkout (i.e., 15), regular checkout leads to better customer experiences. Thus, even when customers select self-checkout because of low basket size, this might lead to lower customer experiences. Retail stores can use these findings to manage their checkout systems effectively, so that they can provide customers with a better shopping experience.

REFERENCES


FOOL ME ONCE, SHAME ON YOU: FOOL ME TWICE SHAME ON AMAZON PRIME

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Keywords: Impulsiveness, self-control, trust, e-commerce, retailer-consumer, Amazon

Description: This empirical study examines in an e-retailing context the effect of self-control on trust, affective attachment and impulse buying in online membership programs, namely Amazon prime.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Following the rapid expansion of e-commerce, the latter has transformed consumers’ shopping experience across available channels. The most evident example of an e-retailer revolutionizing technology is Amazon, the largest e-retailer by online revenue and market capitalization in the world. Amazon has been actually renowned for its continuous adoption of inventive technologies, among which, Amazon Prime.

An increasing number of studies have tackled the multi-faceted concept of e-commerce and its effects on online impulsive shopping (Pappas 2016). Particularly, self-control is a crucial notion for researchers interested in this field, as the lack of the latter might lead to impulsive buying. Furthermore, in a typical retailer-consumer relationship, trust and affective attachments are critical factors that govern such relationships. Former studies have fairly researched concepts of self-control, affective attachment, and online memberships. Nevertheless, they discussed them separately, overlooking the conflicting yet simultaneous outcomes of self-control in online membership programs. The extant literature still lacks a thorough model, integrating cognitive and affective variables between retailers and consumers alongside specific shoppers’ behaviors, such as self-control and impulsiveness. Accordingly, this paper aims to fill this gap by presenting to researchers and practitioners alike a better appreciation of online consumer behavior in the context of Amazon Prime.

Method and Data
A quantitative approach using structural equation modeling, was adopted for the study, as a web-based survey targeted Amazon Prime members in the US. Qualtrics. Validity tests were conducted on two separate fronts: face validity and discriminant validity. Discriminant validity was tested via both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. In total, 630 respondents completed the survey. SPSS 24 and LISREL 8.8 were utilized for data analysis.

This research aimed to integrate cognitive and affective relational variables between retailers and consumers alongside behavioral dimensions such as shoppers’ self-control and impulsiveness in the context of Amazon Prime. Validated multi-item scales were adopted from the related literature.

The cognitive and affective relational variables between retailers and consumers were measured through scales related to two constructs, namely retailer’s trust and retailer’s affective attachment. Trust was measured through the scale developed by Lacey (2007) and Morgan and Hunt (1994). As for affective attachment, items were applied from Thorbjørnsen et al. (2002) to evaluate shoppers’ level of retailer’s love (Farah and Ramadan 2017). In relation to the behavioral-related constructs, consumers’ spending self-control and impulsiveness were measured using the validated scales respectively by Haws et al. (2012) and Rook and Fisher (1995).

Summary of Findings

The study showed that while e-retailers’ membership programs (such as Amazon Prime) have direct positive effects on both the top and the bottom line for the e-retailer employing them, members of such programs are actually deceived in that relationship. This research is the first to delve into the dynamics of e-retailers’ membership programs, revealing the implications of
shoppers’ self-control in similar contexts on the overall consumer-retailer relationship and the ensuing behavioural outcomes.

While it is widely expected for self-control to regulate behavior and thus reduce impulsive buys, the findings of this paper showed that self-control can also increase impulsiveness by reinforcing trust and affection towards Amazon Prime. When consumers have more self-control, they might feel increasingly empowered and safe, thus lowering their guards to further trust the retailer. Eventually, the emotional attachment and trust result in more impulsive purchasing and hence, deceived consumers. Impulsive behaviors might not be sustainable in the long-term, especially when consumers become more aware of the contradictory effects of this relationship. Online retailers are hereby invited to launch competing relational models that would expand the true value shoppers receive without having them undergo any form of deceit.

**Key Contributions**

From a scholarly standpoint, this paper closes a literature gap relating to the integration of behavioral, cognitive and affective relational variables between retailers and consumers. Within the context of retailers’ membership driven programs, in particular Amazon Prime, this study advances the understanding of the underlying online shopper behavior. Despite the well-established notion that self-control delimits online impulsive shopping, this paper has demonstrated that this self-control also reinforces buyers’ cognitive trust and affective attachment toward the retailer.

From a managerial viewpoint, the implications are considerable in relation to the e-retailer, shoppers, and other competing retailers. In the case of Amazon Prime, members feel highly attached to the e-retailer from both a cognitive and emotional perspective, which reinforces their
impulsive buying behavior. Perceived as a high competitive advantage, competing retailers might be lured into replicating this successful model. Nonetheless, despite the bonding between Prime shoppers and Amazon alongside the revenues of the latter, this study shows that such memberships actually deceive consumers in providing them a false sense of self-control. Accordingly, the suggested strategic approach that competing retailers should adopt would be to avoid replicating the same membership model.

*References are available upon request.*
1. Title: FOSTERING THE IMPACT OF BRAND PERFORMANCE METRICS ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY: ROLE OF RELATIONAL QUALITY AND LENGTH

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4. Keywords: Brand Performance Metrics, Relational Quality, Relationship Length, and Customer Loyalty, Moderated -mediation

5. Description: The study expands the brand performance metric knowledge and provide additional insight into the brand performance metrics scale and its relationship with customer loyalty by examining the direct, indirect and interactional effects of relationship quality and relationship length.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

This study tries to understand how interaction of relationship quality (mediator) and relationship length (moderator) simultaneously impact the brand performance metrics and customer loyalty relationship in Indian Banking Industry.

Munoz & Kumar (2004) stated that although the brand is considered one of the most significant components of intangible assets, only a few studies have measured brands' performance metrics impact (Rajagopal, 2008; Tuan 2013). Brexendorf & Keller, (2017) added that measuring the strength and success of an organization’s brand seems to be in its infancy. Most of the studies are fragmented concerning brand performance metrics, including brand equity, brand image, brand value, and brand ethics. Particularly, brand affinity (Rust et al. 2004); perceived brand value (Jayanti & Ghosh 1996); and brand content knowledge (Sherbin, 2013; Leake, 2012) are significant performance measures but their comprehensive impact has yet to be explored. Although Rajagopal (2008) and Tuan (2012) have comprehensively considered brand performance metrics but in a quite limited manner. Key features such as social aspect of the brand and loyalty scheme that embraces additional benefits, extraordinary services, etc., which significantly contribute to customer-brand relationships (Leenheer et al., 2006) are required to expand brand performance metrics framework. The comprehensive role of all the brand performance metrics is yet not considered in the literature. Further, although extant literature has extensively focused on various marketing determinants of relationship marketing, there is a very thin line of research that relates brand performance metrics to relationship marketing outcomes viz relational quality and customer loyalty. Further, mediating role of different marketing variables on brand performance–customer loyalty relationship is not examined in the literature.
A brand being a dynamic construct, it is equally essential to know how relationship quality between brand and loyalty gets affected.

Based on the literature, this study argues that relationship quality, as a mediator, is a strong outcome of the brand performance measures, which will have a strong influence on customer loyalty (Cifci, Ekinci, Whyatt, Japutra, Molinillo, & Siala, 2016). There is also lack of research on studying the effect of demographic factors on relational quality and customer loyalty relationships.

**Method and Data**

The primary data was collected from the bank customers of five major Indian public and private banks operating in Jammu Region, J&K, India. 948 out of 1000 questionnaires distributed to the customers using area sampling, were found useful for data analysis. The data was analyzed and validated using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Structural equation modelling (SEM) and Hayes Macro Process were used for testing the hypotheses. The hypothesis developed to answer the research question include:

**Hypothesis 1:** Brand performance indicators namely brand affinity, brand contents & knowledge, brand ethics, brand image and brand value significantly contribute to brand performance.

**Hypothesis 2:** Brand performance metrics have positive effect on relational quality.

**Hypothesis 3:** Brand performance metrics have positive effect on customer loyalty.

**Hypothesis 4:** Relational quality has significant influence on customer loyalty.

**Hypothesis 5:** Relational quality has mediating effect on brand performance metrics and customer loyalty relationship.

**Hypothesis 6:** Relational quality- customer loyalty relationship is stronger for long relationship length than short relationship length.

**Hypothesis 7:** The indirect effect of brand performance indicators- customer loyalty relationship in the presence of relational quality is conditional at the value of relationship length.

**Summary of Findings**
The study findings reveal that all brand performance metrics, namely brand ethics & image, brand content knowledge, brand affinity and brand value, are essential for building and creating brand performance, relational quality and customer loyalty in banking sectors. Among the select brand performance metrics, brand affinity, brand contents knowledge, and brand value significantly affect brand performance. Specifically brand affinity (viz special treatment benefits, individual intention, loyalty points etc.) and brand content knowledge contribute strongly to the brand performance of the Indian banks. Further, the impact of brand performance metrics on relational quality and customer loyalty reveals that all the brand performance measures are key competitive brand metrics essential to create relational quality and to enhance customer loyalty for banks. The results also depict that the relationship between brand performance metrics and customer loyalty is partially mediated by relational quality. Further, results also confirmed that respondents belonging to long relationship length group impacts relational quality and customer loyalty link more than short-relationship length customers. That is, customers, who stay long with the respective brand, are more satisfied, trustworthy and committed and have more intention to encourage brands to others to become loyal. Finally, the results also proved the existence of moderated mediation effect. Thus, the indirect effect of brand performance on customer loyalty through relational quality is conditional at the value of relationship length.

**Key Contribution**

We contribute to the theoretical and methodological discourse that is relevant in the context of services management. Our study provides evidence to the recognition of the role of relationship quality and length should enable service firms to develop more effective customer-retention
strategies. From a managerial perspective, demonstrating the moderated mediation role of relationship quality and length, our study offers service managers an effective way to manage brand performance and loyalty.

References: (Available on request)
GRAPPLING WITH CHANGE: STRATEGIC RESPONSES TO THE CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING CONSUMER-FACING IN-STORE TECHNOLOGY IN FASHION RETAIL

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Keywords: retail innovation; consumer-facing in-store technology; technological strategy; change management

Description: Managerial reasons for and approaches towards technological change embrace in retailing.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Why do retailers implement (or not implement) in-store technology?

What are retailers’ approaches to technological change embrace in response to a rapidly changing technological environment?

Method and Data

Qualitative research enquiry was undertaken to achieve a deeper understanding of rapidly-evolving managerial issues of change and behaviors in the digital age, to critically evaluate why managers act the way they do concerning the phenomenon of technological change embrace. Technology embrace at organizational level
is an in-depth, complex phenomenon (Rowlands, 2005), which necessitates the perspectives of the actors involved (Uduma and Sylva, 2015; Wolfe, 1994).

Data were collected through in-depth interviews utilizing a semi-structured interview template, which was developed from an extensive literature review to inform the research objectives (Patton, 2014). The sample of key industry informants derived from the wider community of technology providers, consultants and fashion retailers, and consisted of 15 consultants, 13 technology providers, and senior informants from 14 global fashion retailers. The data were analysed following an inductive process of applied thematic analysis (Guest et al., 2012; Miles et al., 2014; Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Beginning with an initial open and free analysis of the transcripts (Corbin and Strauss, 2008), coding labels were revised as data collection and analysis proceeded iteratively (Spiggle 1994). This rigorous interpretive process continued until data saturation meant no new themes were emerging from the analysis.

Summary of Findings

Findings revealed a spectrum of internal and external reasons for technology adoption, ranging from tactical marketing and PR reasons for brand promotion, to mixed reasons leading to different types of technologies being adopted, all the way to strategic reasons involving an innovative vision and culture, where technology is fully integrated into back-end system infrastructure and operations. Actors, consisting of strategic top management, the roles and departments they sit in within the organisation, and whether they are internal or external to the organization, played a key role concerning reasons for technology adoption.

Technological change embrace emerged to be strongly related to reasons for technology adoption. This could involve a strong level of change embrace as
reflected in the company’s long-term strategy, innovative vision and culture, where an agile and flexible approach is part of DNA involving constant adaptation and change. Other levels of change embracement involve a transformative response to change, including retailers that are assimilating technology as part of their business model. In contrast, low levels of change embracement are related to more tactical, temporary, short-term and promotional reasons as part of a reactive plan.

**Key Contributions**

This study contributes to the strategic marketing management literature in the context of retail marketing innovation. It reveals new perspectives on reasons for different levels of technology adoption and technological change embracement, or barriers thereof, in the context of CFIT implementation in the dynamic fashion retail sector. Its main contribution is an empirical framework categorizing the anatomy of fashion retail technological strategies, including a classification of behaviors formed around embedded, transformative and opportunistic strategies to implement CFIT. The emergent hybrid approach represents a point of departure from existing theories of change management. By highlighting a hybrid approach to technological strategy, which delivers change in an agile way and is inextricably linked to technology, this study contributes to change management theorizing.

The findings may benefit senior management with remit to drive cultural change for retail technological transformation, which depends on the hybrid approach adopted, or willingness to adopt. The findings can guide retail consultants and technology providers by showing the importance of a full coaching service to help retailers through strategic innovation transitions, depending on unique organizational circumstances. Finally, there are implications for policymakers: policies and
regulations are needed that encourage openness to new ideas, technologies and people across nations.

References are available upon request.
HOW CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIAL DISTANCE CONCEPTUALIZE IN THE “CGBP-SQ MODEL”

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ABSTRACT

The social distance resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic has changed customers’ shopping behaviours. Customers are shifting to purchase essential products or services at the lowest cost in emerging and developed economies. Whilst the mobile commerce (M-commerce) space never lacks innovation, a new shopping model called Community Group Buying (CGB) is gaining traction. As the CGB model is rapidly becoming the last frontier of M-commerce in China, competition among service providers and retailers that intend to use these services to achieve behavioural loyalty (e.g., revisiting and repurchasing) is inevitable. Since mobile shopping service quality (MS-SQ) has been examined in the literature, the present study proposes an extension based on stimulus–organism–response (S–O–R) theory, aiming to understand what factors affect customer engagement CGB platforms (CGBPs). Then, to provide further actionable insights, this study conceptualizes the mediating effect of CE and moderating role of ‘social distance’ between CGBP-SQ and behavioural loyalty in system relationships. Finally, the research aims to have managerial implications for service providers, retailers and practitioners working in non-profit organizations and governmental agencies.
Keywords: M-commerce, Community Group Buying, Customer Engagement, Behavioural Loyalty, Social Distance

Description: This paper attempts to leverage mobile shopping service quality characteristics to develop a model for understanding factors affecting customer engagement and behavioural loyalty in the community group buying context.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, a mobile device is not just a technological gadget but a cultural object as many people is experiencing the mobile lifestyle (Omar et al., 2021). According to a survey performed in February 2021, about half of those polled said they spend a median of five to six hours each day on their phone, not including work-related smartphone use (UNCTAD, 2021). As a result, most retailers are becoming increasingly aware that they need to embrace a mobile commerce (M-commerce) strategy. M-commerce, in general, refers to any shopping activities with a monetary value that is conducted via a mobile device (Huang et al., 2015), and it is defined as “an extension of e-commerce whereby the transactions of businesses are conducted in a mobile environment using mobile devices” (Leong et al., 2021, p.2). According to Forbes (2021), M-commerce will grow 68% by 2022, and more people will shop on their phones. Furthermore, mobile commerce will drive about 50% of e-commerce globally, and total sales revenue through cell phones account for over $400 billion by 2022 (Kohan, 2020). In this regard, the development of M-commerce platforms has gained theoretical and business attention in various fields, such as information and management, retailing and consumer services, computer and human behaviour, and Interactive Marketing (Chi, 2018; Kaatz, 2020; Leong et al., 2021; Okazaki & Mendez, 2013).
The COVID-19 pandemic has changed customers’ online shopping behaviours. In both emerging and developed economies, customer behaviours are shifting to online purchase essential products or services at the lowest cost (UNCTAD, 2021). Whilst the mobile commerce (m-commerce) space never lacks innovation, as a technological solution, to cater to consumers who have low community mobility, are looking for cost-effectiveness, and are familiar with mobile payment, community group buying— as an m-commerce model of group purchases by community residents – is gaining traction. Community group buying (“CGB”) is a hyper-collective group consumption model for people living in the community or approximate locations to bargain on grocery items through bulk purchase (Wang and Qiu, 2020). Since the pandemic began, CGBP has shown the hottest tech trend to disrupt the traditional offline grocery retail sector in China relatively untapped, less urbanized lower-tier markets (McKinsey & Co, 2021). Giving to market estimates, the size of the CGB market is around 1.7 trillion US dollars (RMB 11 trillion; Bernstein, 2021) and could already exceed 77 billion US dollars (i.e., RMB 500 billion) this year, and the five-year compound annual growth rate (CAGR) may reach close to 100% (Credit-Suisse, 2021) (See; Fig.1).

![Fig.1. CGB Market Forecast 2020 – 2025 (RMB billion); Source: Credit Suisse (2021)](image)
This implies that there is still much opportunity for growth in China already well-developed M-commerce market, signifying significant growth potential for sizeable Chinese service providers and retailing industries. The community group purchase concept is still in its infancy and is continually evolving. This study argues it will become more relevant in China and its M-commerce market. Its capacity to meet lower-income consumers and logistical issues in developing countries make it remarkably adaptable to other rising economies like Indonesia, India, and Brazil (Born, 2021).

The proliferation of the significant opportunity for consumers to receive benefits in reduced acquisition costs or enhanced bargaining power through CGB platforms between researchers and practitioners will remain contentious in the years to come. Further, owing to the introduction capabilities in CGB Platforms such as real-time interactivity (live-chat features), in-app purchasing retailers are allocating significant resources to capture more excellent commercial opportunities. Similarly, (Pantano & Priporas, 2016) concluded that consumers are switching to mobile channels from e-channels because of the possibilities for consumers to live enhanced shopping experiences, thus forcing retailers to amalgamate physical store environments with mobile shopping opportunities to compete in the dynamic and multichannel retail landscape successfully.

In this highly competitive worldwide retailing market, service providers also must advance considerably due to the availability of the Internet and ubiquity of mobile phones, which has unquestionably permeated and revolutionised people's lives, particularly in terms of communication and business-related activities. Therefore, the service providers are warned to facilitate their quality quickly. Inevitably, they tried to obtain a competitive advantage and expand their market by utilising M-commerce and CGB platforms.
Given this introduction, it might be crucial that both retailers and service providers seek to deliver superior services to enter by fulfilling the customers’ needs and staying in the market by understanding how consumers perceive these services. Thus, service quality is many concepts and essential for the success of the retailers due to its close relationship with customer behavioural responses (i.e., repeat purchase probability) (Carlson et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the service quality assessment in a new context is not relatively easy and even challenging due to the specific attributes of the service, such as simultaneous, heterogeneous, intangible, and inseparable (Moeller, 2010).

Some researchers have extensively examined how to assess service quality (Blut, 2016; Parasuraman et al., 2005). However, assessing the new form of technology (CGBP) of service quality differs from traditional service quality. Although there are many instruments in the service quality literature to measure conceptual frameworks in general, no instrument has been mainly devised to measure CGBPs too far. However, previously, scholars have tried to produce and validate measurement scales of service quality within online environments in the same line. Notable frameworks like the E-Service Quality (Blut, 2016; Parasuraman et al., 2005); Collaborative Consumption Service Quality (CC-Qual) (Marimon et al., 2019); Online Brand Community website quality (termed OBC-SiteQUAL) (Carlson et al., 2021) have been examined relevant various attributes in online contexts. Since the e-commerce market is growing (eMarketer, 2021), delivering a high quality of service must be understood in CGB of how customers perceive their mobile services. Thus, because of some limitations of resources during the pandemic, this study presents an extension of the work of Omar et al. (2021) by adopting and modifying the M-S-SQAL scales in a new setting. Examining the new model integrated MS-SQ with CE and behavioural response is an effective tool to set the priorities for the next research.
Against this backdrop, in response to Omar et al. (2021) call for more research to integrate crucial marketing variables like consumer engagement and experience in their conceptual models and provide further insights on m-commerce. Similarly, Dwivedi et al.’s (2020) call for research to better understand engaging and cultivating consumers via digital and m-commerce technologies. Their response to the technology provider and significant issues in response to having a greater insight to international dynamic marketing capabilities and call for papers related post-Covid 19 from journal articles; this research aims to our objectives of conducting this study are folded. Since CGBPs is changing how people engage in shopping, regarding the role mediating role of CE, it is crucial for marketers implementing m-commerce strategies to fully understand the nexus between the CGBP-SQ model of MS-SQ, CE and customer behavioural loyalty. In doing so, the research through dewing a model on stimulus–organism–response (S–O–R) paradigm in environmental psychology (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) seeks to find answers to the following research questions (RQ’s): RQ1. How does the CGBP-SQ model conceptualise OF MS-SQ, and to what theoretical extent does it influence customer engagement in the new context? RQ2. Does customer engagement mediate the relationship between CGBP-SQ and behavioural loyalty? RQ3. How does social distance moderate the proposed system relationships between CGBP-SQ and behavioural loyalty?

Following answering the research question, this study aims to make multifarious contributions to marketing knowledge and practice by proposing a framework based on the S-O-R theory followed by the research model and statement of propositions. Then, the proposed research methodology is outlined that describes the sample, measures, and data collection process. Subsequently, the final section contains the conclusion and anticipated contribution of the research.
2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND PROPOSITIONS

This study draws on the stimulus–organism–response (S–O–R) paradigm in environmental psychology (Russell & Mehrabian, 1974), which depicts the way that the various aspects of the environment as stimuli (S) affect individuals’ internal organisms (O), and in turn, their behavioural responses (R) (Kim et al., 2020). Literature indicates that service quality characteristics are considered environmental cues (Alsaggaf & Althonayan, 2018; Chopdar & Balakrishnan, 2020; Um & Lau, 2018), hence the retail store service quality attributes. For instance, (Chopdar & Balakrishnan, 2020) explored different nonce of stimuli (perceived ubiquity, contextual offering, visual attractiveness and app intensive) that impact impulsiveness and perceived value as an organism (O). In addition, they aimed to understand the drivers of customers’ satisfying experience and repurchase intention (R) in an m-commerce shopping environment in India. Alam and Noor (2020) used physical aspect, reliability, problem-solving, policy, personal interaction as service quality stimuli, corporate image as organism and customer loyalty as a response in the context of superstores in Bangladesh. (Alsaggaf & Althonayan, 2018) employed the SERVQUAL model's five dimensions as environmental stimuli to predict electronic word of mouth and switching intentions (as responses) based on pleasure, arousal, and attitude (organism). In a similar vein, Famiyeh et al. (2018) looked at and tested service quality aspects as environmental stimuli to justify the link between customer loyalty and satisfaction (response). According to the S-O-R paradigm, an organism is a psychological state that links environmental stimuli and individual reactions (Chang et al., 2015).

Despite the critical theoretical advances in service quality that have been made, scholars have called for further enrichment of the CE construct because of its context-dependent nature and the need to capture additional CE response elements (Omar et al., 2021). However, a comprehensive review of the literature indicates that despite several studies on the S-O-R
model in the online and mobile domain, its application in the context of M-commerce is limited (Chopdar and Balakrishnan, 2020). Thus, according to the review of prior literature, this study believes that the S-O-R model is the appropriate theoretic foundation. It allows various app-specific features or captures their holistic social (customer to customer) impact on users’ organismic states and ensuing response. Furthermore, building on the S–O–R paradigm allows developing frameworks relevant to factors affecting CE and behavioural loyalty in CGBPs where it can present how much the changes in technology and social-related cues affect customer perceptions of quality and subsequently their loyalty behaviours.

At this stage, MS-SQ dimensions (See; Table.1) are stimuli that influence the engagement perceptions that represent the consumers’ organism state. Further, we test social distance in CGBP-SQ system relationships. Thus, the framework situates social distance as a moderator variable between CGB-SQ and CE in the behavioural linkage (behavioural loyalty). Fig. 2 illustrates the research model of the study. Next, we describe the hypothesised system of relationships.

![Fig. 2. Conceptual model of CGBP-SQ based on SOR paradigm that includes MS-SQ dimensions (Stimulus) → Customer Engagement (Organism) → Behavioural Loyalty (Response) by moderating role of Social Distance in COVID 19 Pandemic 2020-2021.](image-url)
2.1 CGBP-SQ Development of MS-SQ Dimensions

2.1.1 Efficacy or Perceived Efficiency Quality

The first dimension is efficiency, which refers to accessing and using the application (Omar et al., 2021). It means that the application is simple to use, responds quickly, is appropriately structured, and requires minimum information that must be entered by the users (Parasuraman et al., 2021). According to awning technological aspects in CGB platforms (e.g., Xingshen Youxuan), in recent years, this study argues that in CGBPs, which are sub-sets of m-commerce, the quality of efficiency can stimulate customers to engage in this type of commerce. For example, if a CGB platform is designed efficient (i.e., layouts), visually attractive (i.e., aesthetics), and in terms of navigability, it is easy to use, smooth and quick (e.g., hyperlinks for accessing information). Furthermore, it contains interactivity features (e.g., live-chatting and streaming functions to contact retailers and leaders of the community). Furthermore, the platform protects personal information and accounts (e.g., privacy control options and policies), includes action buttons (e.g., buy and check-out buttons) and facilitates/secures using Quick Response (QR) codes that are secured and convenient. Hence, it can be argued that the efficiency or perceived efficiency quality is a relevant cue to the proposed model play a salient role in consumers’ overall judgement of CGBP-SQ. Therefore:

P1a: Perceived Efficiency Quality is a significant dimension for CGBP-SQ

2.1.2. Content or Perceived Content Quality

The second is content which can define as the information on the CGB platform that is appropriate and correct (See: content in Omar et al., 2021). The perceived quality of content on the platform can define as a level of adequacy and accuracy of the information that was provided by the website (Y. Zhang et al., 2018). Content quality is relevant to the proposed setting because the impact of the information such as images, product information such as price...
and offerings aid consumers in their purchase decisions (Zhang et al., 2018), while in the pandemic, they are not able/allowed to touch and test products (e.g., groceries) therefore, they can only rely on the images and information provided on the CGBPs. It may be that content is an element required to be present on mobile sites (Omar et al., 2021). If a mobile shopping site does not exhibit excellent and relevant content, the site will not compete within the marketplace (Huang et al., 2015).

P1b: Perceived Content Quality is a significant dimension for CGBP-SQ

2.1.3. Fulfillment or Perceived Fulfillment Quality

The third dimension is “fulfilment”, which refers to the degree to which the product or service provider deals with the troubles related to product availability and order delivery (Omar et al., 2021). This dimension has been considered a positive impact on e-service quality (Blut et al., 2015); it refers to the extent to which the sites’ promises about order delivery and item availability are fulfilled. However, in CGBPs can be considered a social factor (customer to customer; C2C; Carlson et al., 2021) where it refers to the online store’ or leader of the community's ability to ensure that consumers receive what they assumed they ordered at the promised time. Therefore, this stage is more relevant in the later shopping process since it primarily relates to the fame of retailer/ service provider and leader or quality/speed of managing deals and order delivery.

P1c: Perceived Fulfillment Quality is a significant dimension for CGBP-SQ

2.1.4. Responsiveness or Perceived Responsiveness Quality

The fourth dimension is responsiveness, which is one of the five MS-SQ dimensions (Omar et al., 2021) and prior literature of e-SQ (Kalia, 2017; Kalia & Paul, 2021; Lee & Lin, 2005; Li et al., 2017) defined as the quality and speed of the process of interacting between retailer/ service provider and handling consumer problem or request (Huang et al., 2015;
Parasuraman, 2005). However, aligned with fulfilment, this dimension can be considered as a technological and social factor. In CGBPs, this study argues that responsiveness or perceived responsiveness quality can refer to an assessment of the effectiveness and promptness (in the real-time) of the accountability of a retailer/service provider to users directly or and their leaders to handle the problems and reliability to solve it through the mobile application. Responsiveness was operationalized in this way based on prior research that suggested that responsiveness is associated with response speed and time and the appropriateness of the information delivered (Kalia & Paul, 2021; Li et al., 2017).

**P1d:** Perceived Responsiveness Quality is a significant dimension for CGBP-SQ

### 2.1.5. Contact or Perceived Contact Quality

The last dimension is contact; adding the role of a community leader or agent can be considered relatively unique among studies exploring service quality. At the same time, it highlighted the quality of the availability of assistance or customer service in real-time through using the CGB platform’s components such as live-chatting and live-streaming. Whereas, some other studies, this dimension relatively introduced as a contact or agent who has a prompt response to customer requests via e-mail addresses, phone, and fax numbers to resolves online order/transaction problems (e.g., Kim and Kim, 2010; Pinho, Martins, & Macedo, 2011; Wu et al., 2011; Akinci, Atilgan-Inan, and Aksoy, 2010). This reach aims to apply this dimension for the CGBP-SQ model where user interaction experience involves a new form of technology and quality and competency of retailer/service provider directly and community leader or agent to refer chatroom, live-streaming or direct voice mailing as a contact method. Therefore, this study considers the relative of this dimension as a novelty to literature.

**P1e:** Perceived Contact Quality is a significant dimension for CGBP-SQ
2.2 Mediating Role of Customer Engagement

In recent years, CE has become one of the Marketing Science Institute’s (MSI) research priorities since 2014 (Busalim et al., 2019; Islam & Rahman, 2016). In the customer engagement theory model constructed by (van Doorn et al., 2010), the main influencing factors are customer, company, and contextual factors; customer engagement affects purchasers (i.e., their perceptions, attitudes, and behavioural outcomes). However, customer engagement can lead to various consequences and co-creation values (e.g., WOM, sharing behaviours) that benefit the brand (Kumar et al., 2010). Similarly, it can enhance customer loyalty and operating performances (Pansari and Kumar, 2017; So et al., 2016), thereby creating a sustainable competitive advantage (Pansari & Kumar, 2016), prestige and legality (Yen et al., 2020) for brands.

Given the impotence of CE, as discussed, the S–O–R theory posits that a response (intention to undertake a behaviour) is evoked through an internal organism (such as CE) after a stimulus is reinforced. Prior CE research has confirmed the significant direct effects of brand involvement (i.e. level of interest related to stimuli) on CE (Harrigan et al., 2017; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Hollebeek et al., 2019), as well as the significant influence of CE on behavioural loyalty outcomes (Fernandes & Moreira, 2019; Hollebeek et al., 2014; So et al., 2016). According to the innovation diffusion theory (Rogers, 2010), people react differently to a new idea, object, or practice because of differences in their perceptions of innovativeness and predisposed tendencies toward adopting innovations. Customers tend to be more willing to use a product or service when they perceive that product or service to be highly innovative (Hwang et al., 2019).

Hence, this study argues that the significant effects of new system relationships in the CGB model potentially extend to CE. For example, positive consumer evaluations of retailers
or service providers through M-commerce stimuli significantly affect CE, and, in turn, CE influences brand loyalty. Similarly, the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) supports this notion, stating that customers reciprocate when they derive benefits from experiences (Carlson et al., 2021). Therefore, if CGBP-SQ exerts positive effects on CE, it can be expected that CE (organism) is strengthened, which, in turn, has positive effects on behavioural loyalty (response). Based on this logic, this study proposes the following propositions:

**P2a and P2b:** CE mediates the relationship between CGBP-SQ and behavioural loyalty

### 2.3 Moderation Role of Social Distance

Social distancing resulting from stay-at-home rules during the Covid19 pandemic can be considered as a new norm in this century that predominantly affects social preferences (Cartwright and Xue, 2020). Social distance is defined as physical remoteness or psychological subjective (i.e., perception) of separation between an individual/group to another individual/group (Baber, 2020; See also: Aron et al., 1992; Buchan et al., 2006). Both distances produce the same psychologically and behavioural (Maglio et al., 2013; Trope & Liberman, 2010). Prior studies in different disciplines consider social distance in the system relationship models (Baber, 2021; Cartwright & Xue, 2020; Saxena et al., 2020; Sung et al., 2020; H. Zhang et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2021). For instance, Baber (2020) consider social distance as a moderator between lack of social interaction and barrier to the effectiveness of online learning. Similarly, Saxena et al. (2021) examined the moderating role of the perceived benefit of mitigating social distance on e-learning quality and student satisfaction framework.

Despite prior studies in different disciplines indicates the impacts of social distance on social preferences, predominantly (Cartwright and Xue, 2020); and social distance has been a perceived issue relevant for comparison people/groups (Baber, 2021) and behaviours (Trope and Liberman, 2010; Maglio et al., 2013), yet, there is lack of knowledge about the role social
distance on CGB models since Construal Level Theory (CLT: Trope et al., 2007) suggests that psychological distance influences people's evaluation and choice systematically. In this notion also since "Construal Levels and Psychological Distance: Effects on Representation, Prediction, Evaluation, and Behavior" (Liberrnan et al., 2007, p.113). This sturdy tent to measure social distance as a moderator in new settings should be considered as the possibility of repeated interactions between retailer/service providers and CGB community members. Therefore, the moderating effect of the perceived social distancing between the CGBP-SQ system relationships during this pandemic period will be a significant factor in this research. To achieve this,

P4: Social distance moderates the relationship between CGBP-SQ and behavioural loyalty

3. CONCLUSION AND ANTICIPATED CONTRIBUTION OF THE RESEARCH

Shifting customer behaviours to online purchasing results of social distancing policies during the COVID-19 pandemic, emerging innovated shopping models through mobile phones, and engaging customers through m-commerce technologies still represent a relatively new frontier of research for marketers CGBPs continues to grow in sophistication and global reach. Indeed, researchers have called for empirical insights into strategies and performance metrics to foster a deeper understanding of new and effective ways of promoting consumer engagement with retail brands in global markets (Huang et al., 2015; Omar et al., 2021). Nevertheless, little externally valuable knowledge has emerged in the CGB literature to date. In response, this research aims to address this gap by conceptualising a framework that introduces and examines the concept of CGBP-SQ as a stimulant to heighten CE perceptions and behavioural loyalty of consumers in under running assessment in China. However, regardless of acknowledging cultural differences and urging with well-established construct CGB model in fast-growing
markets, the findings may follow points of relevance for marketing researchers and practitioners.

To academe, first, this paper contributes to the emerging stream of m-commerce through an empirical study in China that is the hottest context for testing the phenomenon. Second, despite the emerging interest in researching consumer perceptions of technological processes and the benefits of consumer’s value affecting behaviours in literature through the lens of the S-O-R Paradigm, this study aims to provide greater elaboration on expanding the pillars of this framework. Third, in response to the call to future research in the m-commerce context, this study proposed the mediating role of CE on behavioural loyalty. Forth, it theorised the moderating role of social distance between system relationships while unexpected growth in online sales was caused by the lockdown period because of Covid-19 as all non-essential shops closed their doors to customers.

To practice, first, based on the potential opportunities in CGBPs, the study proposed a managerial implication for practitioners such as service providers to assess the quality of their services. Second, retailers can adjust their formats in line with shifting consumer behaviour to CGB models. Third, for new online retailing sectors, including omnichannel companies, neighbourhood food marts, and tech-enabled convenience stores, winning the future of retail could also capture share with innovative business models. Forth, leading players include wholesalers, leverage CGB applets and mini-programs on their m-commerce platforms to offer attractively priced products, benefitting from efficient community referral models and a scalable supply chain. These factors have enabled leading pleys to penetrate lower-tier cities and achieve close to break-even economics rapidly. Moreover, finally, for governmental agencies and non-profit organisations such as resident committees and relevant government and social institutions, at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic or after organising to support low-income or countryside people and communities to provide their needs.
Table 1: Proposed Measurement items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed Dimensions (S)</th>
<th>Definitions and Items</th>
<th>Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>“Whether the platform responds quickly and is easy to use”</td>
<td>Omar et al., (2021)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EF1 The [CGBP] makes it easy to find what I am looking for</td>
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<td></td>
<td>EF2 It is easy to navigate to any area of the [CGBP]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>EF3 The [CGBP] enables me to complete transactions quickly</td>
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<td></td>
<td>EF4 Information of the [CGBP] is laid out logically</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EF5 The [CGBP] loads pages quickly</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>“Whether the information on the [CGBP] is appropriate and correct”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CO1 The content of the [CGBP] is concise</td>
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<td></td>
<td>CO2 The content of the [CGBP] is accurate</td>
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<td></td>
<td>CO3 The [CGBP] contains all of the content as that on the regular platform</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CO4 The [CGBP] contains regularly updated content</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CO5 The content provided is fully understandable</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fulfilment</td>
<td>“The extent to which the platform’s promises about order delivery and item availability are fulfilled”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FU1 The [CGBP] delivers the orders when they are promised</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FU2 The [CGBP] suggests a time frame for when the item will be delivered</td>
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<td></td>
<td>FU3 The [CGBP] sends out the correct items</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FU4 The [CGBP] has accurate stock information and only shows what is available</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>“The effectiveness of the platform’s problem-handling process and return policy”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>RE1 The [CGBP] provides me with convenient options for returning the items</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RE2 The [CGBP] has a clear process for handling returns</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RE3 The [CGBP] offers a meaningful guarantee</td>
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<td></td>
<td>RE4 There is information available of what to do if there is a problem</td>
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<td></td>
<td>RE5 There is a telephone number available to reach the company</td>
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<td></td>
<td>RE6 There is a dedicated online chat function on the [CGBP]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>“The availability of telephone assistance and online representatives”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CC1 The service agents are friendly and willing to assist when receiving complaints</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CC2 The service agents consistently provide useful advice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CC3 The service agents are polite and reassuring</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CC4 The service agents are able to quickly resolve the problem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed Mediator (O)</td>
<td>Definitions and Items</td>
<td>Sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Engagement</td>
<td>“A motivational state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a focal agent/object (e.g. a brand) in focal brand relationships”.</td>
<td>Brodie et al. (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affection</td>
<td>“a consumer's degree of positive brand-related affect in a particular consumer/brand interaction”</td>
<td>Hollebeck et al., (2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AFEC1 I feel very positive when I use the [CGBP]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AFEC2 Using the [CGBP] makes me happy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AFEC3 I feel good in using the [CGBP]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SOCL1 I can find out about people like me on this [CGBP]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SOCL2 I can interact with people like me on this [CGBP]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SOCL3 I can meet people like me on this [CGBP]</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed outcomes (R)</th>
<th>Definitions and Items</th>
<th>Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural loyalty</td>
<td>“as the customer’s willingness to repurchase the product and to continue a relationship with the supplier”</td>
<td>Rauyruen and Miller (2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BELO1 I would consider this [CGBP] as my first choice to buy product/services</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BELO2 I would do more business with this [CGBP] in the next few years</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BELO3 Please estimate how many times during the last 12 months you have used [CGBP]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BELO4 Please estimate how many times during the last 12 months you have purchased in [CGBP]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed Moderator</th>
<th>Definitions and Items</th>
<th>Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social distance</td>
<td>“as the psychological separation between different individuals and/or groups”</td>
<td>Baber et al., (2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD1 If I were to engage in social distancing (e.g., not going to a grocery shop), I would lessen my chance of developing the infection of COVID-19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD2 I am encouraged by engaging in social distancing during the pandemic of COVID-19 because I feel it is necessary to do it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD3 I feel confident in my ability to engage in social distancing during the pandemic of COVID-19.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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HOW DO RELATIONSHIP CHARACTERISTICS AFFECT POINT REDEMPTION BEHAVIOR IN THE COALITION LOYALTY PROGRAMS?

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Keywords: loyalty program, point redemption, relationship characteristics, sales promotion

Description: This study examines the influence of the customer-service provider relationship characteristics on customers’ point redemption behavior in the coalition loyalty program.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

A growing number of companies in service industries have introduced loyalty programs to cultivate customer-firm relationships by offering points redeemable for future discounts. In these programs, point redemption is crucial for building relationships between firms and customers and achieving long-term customer loyalty (Bijmolt, Dorotic, and Verhoef 2011). Prior literature has explored the connection of the relationship characteristics with marketing instruments and customer retention in financial industries. However, the role of the relationship characteristics in the loyalty program context has received little attention. This role is important because the relationship characteristics are observable to managers and that they can readily use the characteristics to target customers who are more likely to redeem.
On the other hand, coalition loyalty programs have become increasingly popular in the loyalty program realm recently. Since a coalition loyalty program contains an assembly of brands from multiple categories, it also allows us to understand the role of relationship breadth in the loyalty program context with greater depth. Therefore, this research tries to answer the following question:

What are the impacts of customer-service provider relationship characteristics (length, depth, and breadth) on customers’ point redemption behavior in the coalition loyalty program?

**Method and Data**

We employ a dataset from a popular coalition loyalty program in South Korea. The program contains 28 brands across 16 categories in the service industry (e.g., restaurant, mobile service, TV shopping channel, music and studio pub, and movie theater).

We investigate redemption behavior with an exponential Type II Tobit (ET2T) model. This model considers two parallel mechanisms in customers’ redemption decisions. In the first mechanism, customers make the discrete choice of whether to redeem the points or not. In the second mechanism, customers decide the number of points redeemed in the transaction. However, we can only observe the number of points redeemed when customers make positive discrete redemption choices in the first mechanism. The two mechanisms correlate with each other so that customers’ discrete redemption choices also affect their redemption amount decisions. The model allows us to estimate the impacts of relationship characteristics on customers’ redemption probability, the number of points redeemed conditional on customers redemption decision (conditional number of points redeemed), and overall redemption amount (expected number of points redeemed).
Summary of Findings

1. Relationship length positively influences customers’ point redemption probability.

2. Relationship depth negatively influences customers’ point redemption probability.

3. Cross-category relationship breadth negatively influences the probability of point redemption but does not influence the conditional number of points redeemed.

4. Within-category relationship breadth negatively influences customers’ point redemption probability but positively influences the conditional number of points redeemed.

5. The effects of the relationship characteristics significantly differ between the redemption probability and conditional redemption amount.

6. The signs of the relationship characteristics’ effects on redemption probability are consistent with the signs of their effects on the expected number of points redeemed.

Statement of Key Contributions

This paper bridges relationship characteristics with point redemption, aiming to provide program managers insights in motivating customers’ point redemption behavior. The paper contributes to prior loyalty program literature in three aspects. First, our study offers a more flexible and accessible framework for program managers to boost point redemption behavior. Compared with other redemption drivers, which are either empirically hard to measure or time-invariant, relationship characteristics are readily observable in real-time. Therefore, program managers can use the relationship characteristics to target customers with higher redemption incentives promptly. Second, we exploit the coalition loyalty program structure of the dataset and investigate the different roles of cross-category breadth and within-category breadth in
customers’ redemption decisions. The analysis extends the discussion of relationship breadth to the coalition loyalty program context, where customers make decisions on services across different categories and those within the same category. Third, we propose an ET2T model that considers both redemption probability and amount and also the correlation between the two parts. This model allows the unobserved redemption drivers (e.g., mood regulatory incentive) to have different effects across the two parts. This feature improves the model’s realism compared to those that assume the independence of the two parts.

*References are available upon request.*
HOW GENDERS REACT DIFFERENTLY TO SERVICE ROBOTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Keywords: Service Robot, Gender, Hotel Segments, COVID 19

Description: This research examines the interaction effect between gender, COVID 19 concern, and hotel segments on service robot adoption.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

The hospitality and service industries have rapidly adopted advanced robots and artificial intelligence (AI) technology for customer service. These robots assist human staff and enhance the guest experience by providing unique services (van Doorn et al. 2017; Mende et al. 2019). Gender is one of the significant factors to consider when investigating preferences for service robot adoption (Belanche et al. 2013). A previous study indicates that male customers are more likely to adopt service robots than female customers (Milner et al. 2019). In the current research, we aim to explore how does gender influences the service robot adoption during the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent study shows customers increased their intention to adopt service robots during the pandemic due to the concern for safety (Kim et al. 2021). As female customers are more concerned about security while using technology-oriented services than male customers (Amin et al. 2006), we propose that female (vs. male) customers have a higher intention to adopt service robots when the concern for COVID-19 is salient. Further, the interaction between gender and COVID-19 concern on service robot adoption is moderated by the hotel segments as luxury hotel provides more feelings of safety than budget hotel (Kim et al. 2021).

Method and Data

191 MTurk workers (47.6% female) completed the study in exchange for a small monetary payment. The experiment consisted of a 2 (COVID 19 concern: high vs. low) × 2 (hotel segments: luxury vs. budget) × 2 (gender: male vs. female) between-subjects design.

Participants were asked to imagine a short scenario about a hotel experience. They were asked to imagine that they stayed at a budget [luxury] hotel for their trip. In this scenario, it was the middle of the night, and they needed an extra towel for their room. They called the room service to get the towel delivered and found out a service robot was delivering the towel. After reading
the scenario, participants were asked to answer the questions about their attitude toward robot service. To measure the concern for COVID-19, we asked whether they or their family/friends were diagnosed positively with COVID-19 during the past months ($N_{\text{positive}} = 103$). A separate pretest indicated that participants showed higher concern toward COVID-19 when they or their close contacts were previously tested positively. Participants also indicated whether they had previous experience with robot service as it may influence customers’ attitude toward the robot.

**Summary of Findings**

A three-way ANOVA was performed on the attitude toward the robot service, using hotel segments manipulation, gender, and perceived risk of COVID-19 as the independent variables with robot experience as the control variable. Consistent with our hypothesis, there was a significant hotel segments $\times$ gender $\times$ COVID 19 diagnosis three-way interaction ($F(1, 182) = 6.16, p = .01$). None of the rest main effects or two-way interaction effects were significant. We also found that robot experience had a positive impact on the attitude toward robot service ($b = .58, p = .004$).

As predicted, when female participants stayed in the luxury hotels, those who had a higher concern about COVID-19 showed a more positive attitude toward robot service than those who had less concern ($M_{\text{positive}} = 6.23$ vs. $M_{\text{not}} = 5.40$, $F(1, 45) = 9.47, p = .004$). However, there was no significant difference for the budget hotel’s condition ($p = .40$). On the other hand, for the male participants, neither the main effects of hotel segments and COVID 19 concern nor the interaction effect was significant.

**Key Contributions**

The COVID-19 pandemic has hugely influenced hotel operations, and the crisis has amplified attention to the robotics service in the hotel industry (Kim et al., 2021). The research expands understanding of customers’ attitudes toward service robots during the pandemic, and the findings are intended to help hotel management develop practical strategies. The research findings indicate that hotels must consider their robotic service based on customers’ gender and the hotel segment. We found that female customers who have a higher concern about the risk of COVID-19 are more willing to use the service robots when they plan to stay at a luxury hotel compared with those who have less concern about COVID-19. However, this effect was not found in the budget hotels’ condition as female customers did not have expectations regarding service robots. In addition, male customers’ attitudes did not change during the pandemic. Hotel management should develop a strategy to assist the service robots based on gender, associated with brand attributes.

*References are available upon request*
IMPACTS OF PERCEIVED ROBOT EERINESS ON FUTURE APPROACH INTENTIONS OF THIRD-PARTY OBSERVERS

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Keywords: Service robots, Service failure, Third-party observers, Eeriness

Description: We investigate the relationship between three parties (i.e., service robots, customers, and third-party observers) and examine the potential impacts on service firms that attempt to invest in the use of service robots and integrate them into the frontline of business.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Robots continue to advance toward functioning as human employees, but they currently do not look exactly like human employees. We examine the effects of viewing an interaction between a humanlike, but eerie looking robot and a customer on third-party observers of this interaction. While robots are advancing in their capabilities, we know little about the impacts of their use in a service failure and recovery interaction on viewers of the interaction. To fill in this research gap, we conduct a scenario-based one-factor between-subjects experiment to examine (1) the effects of perceived eeriness on third-party observers’ service encounter evaluation and future approach intention, and (2) the moderating role of empathy on these effects. Our study uncovers service encounter evaluation as a construct that mediates the negative effect of perceived robot eeriness on third-party observers’ approach intention. We also identify empathy as a boundary condition...
of the negative effects of perceived robot eeriness on third-party observers’ service encounter evaluation and approach intention.

Research Question

Our study aims to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Does the perceived eeriness of a service robot affect future approach intention of an observer that views a service encounter between a service robot and another customer?

RQ2: Does the perceived service encounter evaluation mediate the relationship between the service robot’s perceived eeriness and the future approach intention of a third-party observer?

RQ3: Are there boundary conditions that impact these relationships such as empathy?

Method and Data

We conducted a scenario-based experiment in which we manipulated robot eeriness. Our pretest results show (using 100 respondents recruited from Amazon’s MTurk) that four robots (i.e., the one-eye mechanical, the no-face humanlike, the artificial humanlike, and the mechanical arm) were significantly different in eeriness. A one-way within-subjects ANOVA revealed a significant effect of the images on eeriness ($F(4.89, 483.60) = 92.30, p < 0.01, \eta^2_p = .48$). Pairwise comparisons revealed significant differences between the four images ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, these four images were used in the subsequent main study.

The main study was a single factor (i.e., robot eeriness) between-subjects experimental design with four conditions (i.e., the one-eye mechanical, the no-face humanlike, the artificial humanlike, and the mechanical arm). Two hundred and seventy-two MTurk workers participated in the main study. Thirty-one did not pass the attention check and none guessed the purpose of
the study, leaving 241 respondents in the final data set (female = 125; mean age = 44.44, SD = 13.01). We tested our hypotheses using Hayes’ (2018) PROCESS.

Summary of Findings

Our study shows that when third-party observers view an interaction between a customer and a service robot, the eeriness of the robot impacts the observer’s potential future behavior. We found that the perceived eeriness of the service robot had a negative effect on the third-party observer’s future approach intentions toward the firm ($b = -0.330$, $SE = 0.055$, $p < 0.001$). Secondly, approach intention was positively affected by service encounter evaluation ($b = 0.453$, $SE = 0.07$, $p < 0.001$). The service encounter evaluation was negatively affected by perceived robot eeriness as predicted ($b = -0.243$, $SE = 0.049$, $p < 0.001$). Lastly, we found support for the attenuation of the negative effects of perceived eeriness on service encounter evaluation ($b = 0.047$, $SE = 0.023$, $p = 0.043$) and on approach intention ($b = 0.052$, $SE = 0.026$, $p = 0.043$) by means of empathy. This suggests that although a service robot may be perceived as eerie, if a third-party observer can feel empathy toward the service robot, it will weaken the negative effect of eeriness. This finding is important as managers will have to find ways to attenuate the negative effect of eeriness.

Key Contributions

Our research makes contributions in three ways. First, our study focuses on the service failure situation with robots, and the impacts on the service encounter evaluation and future approach intent of the observer. A third-party perspective is important because a third-party observer often views interactions between employees and other customers; this interaction, although not directly between the third-party observer and the firm, may have effects on the observer’s future intentions. Second, we answer the call of Lu et al. (2020) and attempt to provide more empirical
data of the human-robot service interaction phenomenon. We do so by conducting an experiment to investigate how third-party observers evaluate human-to-robot interactions in a service failure context. Finally, our work responds to De Keyser et al.’s (2019) call to understand the role of empathy in the context of embodied robotic agents. We do so by examining the moderating effect of empathy in a service context. We also contribute by providing evidence of the role of service encounter evaluation as a mediating mechanism in explicating the effect of perceived robot eeriness on third-party observers’ future approach intentions.
Investigating shopper value calculus during COVID-19: A replication study

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Abstract
This study conducted in the post-coronavirus era is a replication of the study published in pre-coronavirus times. The findings of the pre-coronavirus study showed that shoppers not only derived higher utilitarian value (UV) from online shopping compared with instore shopping but UV had a higher impact on Shopper Loyalty to the online website compared with hedonic value (HV) and social value (SV). On the other hand, instore shopping provided greater HV and SV to shoppers than online shopping. Although UV had the highest impact on instore shopping as in. online shopping, the impacts of HV and SV on SL to instore outlets was higher than the impacts of HV, SV on SL to online shopping websites. But does this shopper value calculus hold in the post-coronavirus era which has brought about some momentous changes in our society. We conduct this round 2 of the study to find out and observed that the consumer value calculus had changed dramatically with useful implications for ecommerce.

Keywords
Utilitarian Value, Hedonic Value, Social Value, Shopper Loyalty

Statement of contribution
The study finds the retail landscape shift decisively in favor of online shopping in the post-COVID-19 era. While in the pre-COVID era online shoppers derived greater utilitarian value than instore shopping, the brick-and-mortar retail outlets provided greater abstract values to the shopper such as hedonic and social value. However, in the post-COVID-19 era with social distancing norms and stay-at-home orders, shoppers derived greater amount of all three aforementioned values in online shopping than in instore shopping. The implications of this trend are immense for retailing business.

Introduction
In B2C ecommerce, online shopping outlets not only compete with each other but also with instore shopping outlets for market share. A recent study published by the authors (Kakar and Kakar, 2018d) (names redacted for blinded review) found that both retail formats have their distinctive advantages and appeal to shoppers in different ways. Shopping online has utilitarian advantages such as shopping convenience, ability to compare piece quickly across multiple shopping websites and get the best deals, instore shopping has hedonic and social advantages. Online stores can create atmospherics through aesthetically chosen colors, product display and music, but these sensual pleasures are more keenly experienced in instore shopping retail outlets. Additionally, instore shopping provides opportunities for social interaction, such as shopping with family and friends, interacting with a sales assistant. or simply people watching. Additionally, shopping instore has symbolic value. For example, buying luxury goods at Louis Vuitton or Cartier is a symbol of status and prestige and buying clothes at Zara gives the impression of being “cool”.

The study found that while utilitarian goals were found to be important to shoppers in patronizing an outlet, the more abstract values (hedonic and social) stimulate repeated visits. These abstract
values also resulted in higher unplanned purchases resulting in higher purchase to visit ratio in instore shopping compared to online shopping. Many impulse buying (unplanned purchases) behaviors cannot be stimulated in an online environment such as seeing an ice-cream and feeling like buying it. Also, shoppers incur psychological costs for failure to make a purchase in instore outlets. The sunk cost of futile time, effort and money spent in reaching the outlet often induces the buyer to make some token purchase.

However, the study was conducted in the pre-coronavirus era. The findings of this pre-coronavirus study showed that shoppers not only derived higher utilitarian value (UV) from online shopping compared with instore shopping but UV had a higher impact on Shopper Loyalty (SL) to the online website compared with hedonic value (HV) and social value (SV). On the other hand, instore shopping provided greater HV and SV to shoppers than online shopping. Although UV had the highest impact on instore shopping as in: online shopping, the impacts of HV and SV on SL to instore outlets was higher than the impacts of HV, SV on SL to online shopping websites. But does this shopper value calculus hold in the post-coronavirus era which has brought about some momentous changes in our society. We conduct round 2 of the study to find out.

**Literature Review**

The conceptualization of hedonic and utilitarian value has been well accepted in consumer behavior, information systems and human computer interaction literature (Kakar, 2015abcd; Kakar, 2017ab). Although, different terminologies are used for utilitarian and hedonic values (see table below) they essentially convey the functional and affective benefits provided by the products to the users and consumers of product and services (Diefenbach and Hassenzahl, 2009; Kakar, 2018abcd). A large number of studies in all three literatures have investigated the impacts of hedonic and utilitarian values on intention to buy, use, promote and remain loyal to tangible and intangible products such as mobile phones, laptops, computer software, consumer staples, office supplies and services such as travel, tourism and hospitality (e.g., Chitturi et al., 2008; Park and Mowen, 2007; Kivetz and Simonson, 2002; Gursoy, Spangenberg and Rutherford, 1996; Babin, Darden and Griffin, 1994; Chandon et al., 2000; von Dran, Zhang and Small, 1999; van der Heijden, 2004; Wu and Lu, 2013; Gerow, Ayyagari, Thatcher and Roth, 2013; Kakar 2020abcdefg).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literature</th>
<th>Utilitarian Value</th>
<th>Hedonic Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consumer Behavior</td>
<td>Quality Value (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001)</td>
<td>Emotional Value. (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Systems</td>
<td>Perceived Usefulness (Davis, 1989; Kakar 2016abcd)</td>
<td>Perceived Enjoyment (Davis, 1989; Kakar 2016abcd)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HV and the UV of online shopping have been researched in literature too (e.g., Overby and Lee, 2006; Fiore, Jin, and Kim, 2005; Kakar, 2012ab; Kakar, 2014). However, unlike in instore shopping less attention has been focused on social value (SV) of online shopping. Research in in-store shopping also viewed shopping as a social outing and a way to bond with family and friends (Arnold and Reynolds, 2003). Additionally, patronizing a particular store or buying a particular product represents a way in which the consumer wants to see herself or be seen by others (Sheth et al., 1991; Sirgy et al., 2000; Sweeney and Soutar, 2001) and can serve as a vehicle for status enhancement by communicating “signs of position or membership to others” (Rintamaki et al., 2006), e.g., buying luxury goods at Cartier is a status symbol.

Additionally, consumers are known to identify themselves in relation to other consumers or group of consumers (Bagozzi, 2007; Kelman, 1974). “When I go to Starbucks, I am part of a closed club of aficionados even if I don’t interact with any.” (Aaker, 2009). Thus, retail shopping experience can also be used by individuals in enhancing self-esteem as well as assigning social identity and status to themselves as well as others (Belk, 1988; Solomon, 1983).

For better understanding, we compile the essential differences between UV, HV and SV from a comprehensive and reflective review of past work in the domain (see below):
Consolidated Summary of Differences between Hedonic-Utilitarian-Social Value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UTILITARIAN VALUE</th>
<th>HEDONIC VALUE</th>
<th>SOCIAL VALUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Represents “shoulds” or reasoned preferences (Bazerman, Tenbrunsel and Wade-Benzoni, 1998)</td>
<td>Represents “wants” or affective preferences (Bazerman, Tenbrunsel and Wade-Benzoni, 1998)</td>
<td>Represents social meaning and self-expression choices of the user (Elliot, 1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targets Homo Economicus - Consumers are utility calculator (Rintamaki, 2006)</td>
<td>Targets Homo Ludens - Consumers are guided by senses (Rintamaki, 2006)</td>
<td>Targets Homo Faber - Consumers convey their personalities, lifestyles and beliefs through conspicuous consumption (Rintamaki, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is a means to an end (Babin and Harris, 2011)</td>
<td>Is an end in itself (Babin and Harris, 2011)</td>
<td>It can be both a means (social status) and an end in itself (self-esteem) (Rintamaki, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generates cognitive satisfaction response when fulfilled (Chitturi et al., 2007; Berman, 2005)</td>
<td>Generates affective delight response when fulfilled (Chitturi et al., 2007; Berman, 2005)</td>
<td>Builds self-esteem and social status when fulfilled (Elliot, 1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be Objectively appraised (Chitturi, 2009)</td>
<td>Is Subjective, Experiential (Chittri, 2009)</td>
<td>Is Interactional, Relational (Elliot, 1997)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Method - Round 2 of Study

We replicated our May 2018 study in March 2020 with the same participants. 93% of the 172 participants who responded in round 1, also responded in this second round of the study. Data from only those who responded in both rounds were analyzed to reveal some interesting findings that portend a promising future for B2C commerce.

As in Round 1, in additions to demographics, data pertaining to HV, SV, UV and SL was captured from the 160 participants using tested measures. Rintamaki et al. (2006) measures were used for HV, SV and UV and Yoo and Donthu (2001) measure adapted by Lin and Sun (2009) was used for shopper Loyalty (SL) – please see Appendix A for the list of items. Further, as in round 1, participants at the end of the shopping event provided their response to the outcome of such shopping event by checking on one of the four boxes below depending on whether the purchases were planned or not planned.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planned purchases</th>
<th>Purchases not planned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purchases made</td>
<td>Planned purchases made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchases not made</td>
<td>Unsuccessful attempt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Browsing/ Window shopping</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Various statistical methods were used to compared data obtained in the two rounds of the study such as paired t-test and difference in proportion Z-test. MHMR (Moderated hierarchical Multiple Regression) analysis was also conducted on data after controlling for extraneous variables such as age and gender of subjects. Logistic regression was used to model the impacts of value on actual purchases made by the shoppers.

Analysis of Results and Discussion
While in round 1 of the study Instore shopping evoked greater shopper loyalty (SL), and provided higher HV and SV than online shopping, in round 2 online shopping was found to be higher in UV, SV and SL. (Table 1). No significant difference was found for HV. With state government issuing social distancing mandates and stay-at-home orders, the avenues for social interactions outside of home including those provided by instore outlets reduced. Perhaps this resulted in people increasing their social activities online. During the debriefing session of this round 2 study, shoppers did indicate that their time spent on social media increased and this included participation in social commerce activities such as interacting with other online shoppers and exchanging their purchasing and product experiences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Online</th>
<th>Instore</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Online</th>
<th>Instore</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utilitarian value (UV)</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>1.3**</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>1.8**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonic Value (HV)</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>-0.7**</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Value (SV)</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>-4.2***</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>0.4*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopper Loyalty (SL)</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>-0.9*</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>0.8***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05 , **p < 0.01, ***p<0.01

Table 1. Comparison of values provided by online versus instore shopping outlets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Variables added in each step</th>
<th>Round 1</th>
<th>Round 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Online Shopping</td>
<td>Instore Shopping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Control: Gender, Age, Experience</td>
<td>0.09*</td>
<td>0.10*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Main Effect: UV</td>
<td>0.26*</td>
<td>0.22*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Main Effect: HV</td>
<td>0.19*</td>
<td>0.21*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Main Effect: SV</td>
<td>0.15*</td>
<td>0.24*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05 , **p < 0.01, ***p<0.01

Table 2. MHMR for impacts of UV, HV and SV on SL

Further, the impact of HV and SV on SL increased considerably in online shopping but decreased in instore shopping and the impact of UV on SL increased in instore shopping but decreased slightly in online shopping (Table 2). Deprived of HV and SV in instore shopping due to shoppers wanting to complete their shopping tasks quickly amid coronavirus fears, shoppers were therefore giving more importance to deriving HV and SV in online shopping conducted from the safety of their homes.
A one-sample proportion test (Table 3) showed that whether the purchase was planned or unplanned, shoppers made significantly higher (P<=0.05) purchases per visit from instore outlets than online outlets in both rounds of the study. The one-sample proportion test involved conducting a z test for difference in proportion for purchases made for each subject in online versus instore environments. A paired t-test show that in round 1 shoppers made more purchases in online outlets when purchases are planned, while in round 2 shoppers made more purchases in instore outlets when the purchases were planned. Probably they wanted to move outside of home only when necessary to make purchases. For unplanned purchases shoppers prefer instore outlets in round 1 while for unplanned purchases shoppers preferred online outlets in round 2.

The results of the logistical regression in Online and Instore shopping are shown in Table 4. In actual purchases made by shoppers the impact of HV and SV increased considerably in online shopping from round 1 to round 2 while their corresponding impacts decreased between round 1 and round 2 in instore shopping. Further the impact of UV increased in instore shopping between round 1 and round 2 while the impact of UV decreased in online shopping. It was as if the roles of UV, SV and UV were reversed between online and instore shopping. Instore shoppers in the coronavirus era were more interested in deriving UV from their shopping while online shoppers were more interested in deriving abstract values such as HV and SV from their shopping.
Practical Implications

This implications for online shopping are clear. There is a unique opportunity for online shopping to steal a decisive and sustained march on instore shopping. With SV and HV becoming salient in online shoppers’ value calculus and shoppers deriving increased HV and SV from online shopping in the post-covid-19 era, the traditional retail advantage of instore shopping is under siege. Further, as social distancing and other restrictions due to coronavirus are expected to remain with us for a long time, it is an opportune time for online shopping retailers to use available technology to provide features that will give them unassailable advantage over instore shopping.

For example, with the virtual reality (VR) revolution already underway, online retailers can use VR as a means to provide instore consumer shopping features on their websites to attract the customers away from brick-and-mortar stores. VR can be used to convert physical items to 3-D digital objects that can be manipulated by consumers and even provide them with tactile sensation. Customers like to examine and touch merchandise before buying. The Total Retail Survey (2016) highlighted than more than 60% of shoppers frequent instore shopping outlets because they can touch, feel and examine merchandise before buying. VR can also help shoppers to wander freely through the virtual online store rather than be confined to two dimensional images.

The findings of the study show that online shopping already has a utilitarian advantage over instore shopping. By allowing people to indulge in their fantasies and providing social presence, VR and other digital technologies can also help online retailers storm into traditionally instore strongholds by making online shopping an even more enjoyable and socially rewarding experience than instore shopping. Online shopping can be multi-sensory and real-life like experience through the use of aesthetically pleasing colors, images, videos and music; and simulation of presence of crowds through the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Live chats with trained sales assistants and collaborative online shopping through the use of co-browsing technologies can provide a socially engaging environment to people starved of social contact due to covid-19 restrictions. Thus, in the post of covid-19 world VR, AI and other technologies can be judiciously deployed by online retailers to provide shoppers an pleasurable, immersive yet healthy and safe shopping experience.

APPENDIX A. Measures Used in the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures and Items</th>
<th>Utilitarian Value (Rintamaki et al., 2006)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I save money when I shop at this site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make inexpensive purchases at this shopping site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I got my purchases done cheaper at this shopping site than if I had made them elsewhere</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was able to get everything I needed at one stop</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was able to shop at this site without disruptions and delays</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was able to make my purchases conveniently at this site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures and Items</th>
<th>Hedonistic Value (Rintamaki et al., 2006)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>While shopping at site, I feel happy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy shopping at this site, not just because I am able to get my purchases done</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When shopping at this site, I feel excited</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had great fun shopping at this site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my opinion, shopping at this site is a pleasant way to spend leisure time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping at this site makes me feel adventurous and makes me want to find interesting products</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Social Value** *(Rintamaki et al., 2006)*

- Patronizing this shopping site fits the impression that I want to give to others
- I am eager to tell my friends/acquaintances about this shopping site
- I feel that I belong to the group of shoppers who shop at this site
- I found this shopping site to be consistent with my style
- I felt like a smart shopper by shopping at this site
- This shopping site gave me something that is personally important or pleasing for me

**Shopper loyalty** *(Lin and Sun, 2009)*

- I will promote this shopping website to my close friends
- In thinking about internet shopping, I first think about this shopping website
- I can hardly consider changing to other shopping websites
- In future years, I would still often purchase from this shopping website

### APPENDIX B. Results of Factor Analyses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>U1</td>
<td>0.809</td>
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<tr>
<td>U2</td>
<td>0.831</td>
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<tr>
<td>U3</td>
<td>0.823</td>
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<tr>
<td>U4</td>
<td>0.817</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
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<tr>
<td>U6</td>
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<td>H1</td>
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<td>S9</td>
<td>-0.044</td>
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</table>
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INVESTIGATING THE WILLINGNESS TO PAY FOR ENHANCED MOBILE
INTERNET SERVICES: EVIDENCE FROM A MOBILE NETWORK UPGRADE

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Keywords: Willingness to Pay, Consumer Reactions, Pricing Model, Mobile Internet, Natural Language Processing

Description: This paper offers one of the first investigations on consumers' willingness to pay (WTP) for two different mobile internet pricing models, including the speed-based model and the data-consumption-based model.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This paper offers one of the first investigations on consumers' willingness to pay (WTP) for two different mobile internet pricing models, including the speed-based model and the data-consumption-based model. We examine consumer sentiment toward unexpected slow network speed and data overuse problems, which provides valuable information for understanding customers' WTP for increasing network speed or data allowance. Our empirical strategy leverages the staggered introduction of 4G network across various districts in a metropolitan Asian city and a quasi-experimental setup. We find that consumers are more willing to pay for increasing network speed than data allowance in the new mobile internet era. Furthermore, the analyses reveal that substantial heterogeneity in consumer sentiment is explained by consumers' income and age. These insights into consumers' reactions can inform relevant stakeholders of optimal responses around future mobile network pricing models.

Research Question

Pricing models of mobile network services are of interest in the competitive telecommunication industry. Till date, little empirical evidence exists to understand if existing pricing models (i.e., data-consumption-based pricing plans) are well received by the customers. Ideally, pricing models should be set in a way in which individuals are willing to pay for increased download speeds or additional data allowance. However, this intuition may be challenged because some consumers might not intend to use more data than before but had unconsciously overused their data limits when a faster mobile internet service was introduced. Furthermore, with the impending rollout of 5G technologies in various countries, the speed of mobile internet service would yet increase again. This calls for a deeper reflection on whether a data consumption-based model is the right way to price mobile internet services. The valuation of mobile internet data may shift in consumers'
mindset, as an upgrade in mobile network technology makes these services more easily accessible. Although mobile internet has a huge market, it is surprising that companies do not have a clear understanding of consumers’ willingness to pay (WTP) for mobile internet upgrades. This paper investigates consumers' WTP using empirical methods.

**Method and Data**

We address the research question using a proprietary call center service dataset from a large telecommunications company. The dataset contains all complaint calls against the service provider during a period when the service provider upgraded their mobile internet service from 3G to 4G. Our approach is based on the idea that customer reactions towards mobile internet service is a valuable input for understanding their WTP for the improved mobile internet service. Specifically, by using topic-modeling to identify topics of the complaints, we can understand consumers' WTP for the increase in mobile internet speeds and additional mobile internet data. Our identification strategy relies on 4G mobile network introduction. By contrasting the change in consumer sentiment of mobile services before and after the introduction of 4G with the change of consumer sentiment of home-based broadband services, we can see if the introduction of 4G has an impact on consumer sentiment. We construct a consumer sentiment index based on text contents in each service call using Natural Language Processing techniques. By conducting a granular investigation of subpopulations' sentiments disproportionately affected by diverse complaint topics, we can generate insights into consumers' WTP.
Summary of Findings

Our empirical analysis yields several significant findings. First, our main model estimates the effect of unexpected problems on consumer sentiment when upgrading from 3G to 4G mobile networks. Interestingly, we uncover a significant negative relationship between mobile network upgrade and consumers' sentiments. Second, we categorize the contents of complaints into two topics, including speed and data overuse, and re-estimate the main model. Our findings show that unexpected slow speed cause more negative sentiment than unexpected data overuse. Thus, it seems that customers have a higher WTP for high-quality speed than large data allowance when purchasing 4G mobile services. Finally, we show that consumers' education levels and local socioeconomic conditions significantly influence consumers' sentiments toward mobile network upgrade. This result suggests that the demand level for high-speed internet may be a crucial driver for consumers' sentiment variations, as wealthier and more educated consumers are heavy users of high-speed mobile internet and may have higher expectations on it.

Key Contributions

In this paper, we provide among the first revealed willingness to pay (WTP) for two different pricing models in the mobile internet context including the speed-based model and the data-consumption based model. We examine consumer sentiment toward unexpected slow network speed and data overuse problems, which provides valuable information for understanding customers WTP for increasing network speed or data allowance. Our empirical strategy leverages the staggered introduction of 4G network across various districts in a city, which created quasi-experimental and long-run variation in consumer sentiment among different districts. Using a DID design, we find that consumers are more willing to pay for increasing network speed than data.
allowance in the mobile internet era. These insights can inform relevant stakeholders of optimal responses around future mobile network pricing models. We also find that substantial heterogeneity in consumer sentiment is explained by income and age. This finding highlights the importance of targeting the special group of people with the greatest demand when dealing with consumer reactions to new mobile network plans or services.

References are available upon request.
MULTICULTURAL READINESS IN SERVICE ECOSYSTEMS

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Keywords: Multicultural organisation, Readiness, Intercultural competence, cultural diversity.

Description: This study reconceptualised multicultural readiness, and operationalise it by developing a multiple item scale, namely a multicultural readiness instrument (MRI).

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

With growing numbers of migrants, foreign students, tourists and business travellers, modern servicescapes are increasingly becoming more multicultural. Hence, it is important for people from diverse cultural backgrounds to be able to interact effectively with one another in order to deliver optimum value to everyone involved in these intercultural interactions. However, there are no tools or benchmarks available for the service organisations to assess and improve their ability to engage with their increasingly diverse key stakeholders. In this study, we address this important research gap, by developing a new multidimensional construct, called ‘Multicultural Readiness’ (MR), and develop a scale to operationalise it at both individual and organisational levels. We also develop and test a conceptual model consisting of several
antecedents and outcomes of MR to understand its impact within service ecosystems. Finally, we propose to develop an innovative benchmarking system as a managerial tool to help service organisations assess and improve their MR levels. This paper would extend our knowledge on this important topic by providing new theoretical and managerial insights.

**Method and Data**

We began by conducting a comprehensive literature review to define the dimensions and sub-dimensions of multicultural readiness at both individual and organisational levels. Next, we generated an initial pool of scale items using our updated literature review. We conducted interviews with 21 employees working in Australian services sector using a snowballing approach. We then assessed the face and content validity of the shortlisted items by asking six experts (from academia and industry) to rate the extent to which the items represent at least one of the dimensions of our MR construct. Next, we developed a self-administered questionnaire with the final list of items and conduct a survey of at least 400 participants for each survey for scale purification purpose. To validate the final MR scale and test our conceptual model, we used another self-administered survey with at least 400 participants for each survey similar in profile to our first survey. We tested the reliability, convergent and discriminant validity, dimensionality, and measurement invariance of MR scale using well-established procedures. We also tested the nomological validity and predictive validity of the newly developed scales. Finally, we would review the relevant benchmarking literature to develop an appropriate benchmarking system for individuals and organisations.

**Summary of Findings**

Through literature review and exploratory study, we identified the specifications of multicultural ready individuals and organisations and categorised them under five main themes. Next through a quantitative approach, we validated the third order reflective model of the
multicultural readiness construct at the individual level (IND MR) and organisational level (ORG MR). We also found organisational culture has a significant positive effect on both IND MR and ORG MR. We also found that IND MR and ORG MR have a significant positive impact on employee performance, job satisfaction, and organisational performance.

**Key Contributions**

This paper addresses a significant gap in intercultural service encounters research by extending the important line of thinking from ‘competence’ to the concept of ‘readiness’. By conceptualising MR, it paves the way to move beyond the ‘competence boundaries’ and investigate how individuals and organisations can put their competence into play to effectively embrace multiculturalism and reap the benefits it potentially creates. Next, it introduces two scales to measure MR at both individual and organisational levels. This study contributes to the services marketing literature by not only assessing knowledge, abilities, and skills but also the propensity of both service employees and the organization to behave in a multi-culturally appropriate way to optimize outcomes. MRI will also help service organizations operating in multicultural societies assess their individual employee and overall organizational MR, and investigate their strengths and weakness in the provision of services within culturally diverse settings. Understanding the MR level of individuals and identifying the ways to make them more multi-culturally ready is important in increasing their readiness to engage in a meaningful manner with those from other culture, which leads to be more successful in multicultural organisations in terms of achieving individual goals, better performance, and satisfaction with the job.
PLUS-SIZE SHOPPERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THE PLUS-SIZE WOMEN’S APPAREL INDUSTRY

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Keywords: Plus-size shopping, Qualitative interviews, Perceptions of shoppers, Perceptions of retailers

Description: Semi-structured interviews with 17 plus-size clothing shoppers reveals that plus-sized apparel shoppers feel underrepresented, undervalued, and unseen.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction

While the apparel industry is beginning to respond to the growing demand for plus-size apparel, the business of marketing women’s plus-size apparel is still is unsatisfactory for consumers. Yet, research that sheds light on plus-size consumers’ perceptions of the plus-size apparel industry is lacking. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to understand plus size shoppers’ perceptions of the current plus-size women’s apparel industry. Determining what shoppers think and want from the industry will help contribute to a better understanding of what firms can do to reach and satisfy their customers.

Research Question

What do plus-size shoppers think of the women’s apparel industry?
Method

The exploratory data for this study was collected via 17 semi-structured interviews of customers who are plus size shoppers. Because the actual measurements of the sizes of clothes vary across brands, we focused on consumers who self-reportedly shop in the plus-size sections or outlets rather than focus on consumers who wear specific clothing sizes. All transcripts were analyzed by two coders – one of whom was the interviewer. Following the procedures of grounded theory, transcripts were analyzed using an iterative reading approach (Price and Arnould 1998; Strauss and Corbin 1990). A third coder was charged with identifying data that did not fit the assigned group or subgroup. Participants were all women, ranged in age from 21 to 34 years-old, and ranged in size from US size 14 - 24.

Summary of Findings

The six themes that emerged from the interviews are narrow representation of body shapes/types, plus-size customers not valued/wanted, lack of plus-size models, lack of identification/brand connection with plus-size clothing retailers, unfair pricing, and unavailability of stock. A final theme emerged from the interviews suggests some optimism from shoppers. That theme involves the perceptions of an “improving industry” across all six themes.

Key Contributions

In sum, the interviews revealed that plus-sized women are not satisfied, feel marginalized, and do not identify with retailers when shopping for clothing. This disconnect between the plus-size
market and the industry is worrisome because prior research shows that consumers’
identification with companies has positive implications for the firm.

This research contributes to practice by showing where marketing managers in the clothing
industry are falling short. Our findings pinpoint the areas that should be improved to elicit
desirable behavioral loyalty and enhance emotional attachment with the plus-size apparel market.
Fortunately, plus-size shoppers expressed optimism that the industry is improving. This finding
should be encouraging to firms who cater to this market.

References available upon request.
SUBSCRIPTION COMMERCE: AN ATTACHMENT THEORY PERSPECTIVE

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Keywords: subscription commerce, subscription-based online services, attachment theory, attachment styles.

Description: This paper investigates the effects of secure personal and consumer attachment styles on the attitude towards the adoption of a subscription-based online service.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Despite the recent success of subscription models in online retail, insights on psychographic characteristics influencing consumers’ adoption remain rather scarce. This research addresses the role of attachment theory in the adoption of subscription-based online services (SOS). In a subscription setting, a consumer enters into a relationship with a company not only for the short period of time an actual transaction takes (e.g., a purchase in a store) but for a longer
period, hence a subscription. An important theory that explains how humans form relationships towards different attachment objects and how they behave in these relationships is attachment theory. Attachment theory argues that people inhabit different levels of attachment anxiety and avoidance and thus different levels of being comfortable in relationships. Given the relational setting of subscription services, attachment theory seems applicable for exploring consumers’ adoption. We, therefore, propose a conceptual model linking personal attachment via consumer attachment and loyalty to the attitude towards adopting an online retailer’s subscription offer. As adoption might not be exclusively determined by psychographic characteristics, we further hypothesize an influence of hedonic as well as utilitarian motivation.

**Method and Data**

We applied partial least squares structural equation modeling to test our hypothesized framework. A structured online questionnaire covering all relevant constructs was distributed through the university’s student email distribution list and shared via social media. As compensation, participants could enter a draw for coupons. We assessed a total of 394 completed questionnaires, of which we excluded 116 due to wrong answers considering an attention check, incomplete answers, or outliers, resulting in a final sample of 278 questionnaires. The questionnaire covered items on loyalty, secure personal attachment, and the two facets of secure consumer attachment. Furthermore, utilitarian motivation, hedonic motivation, and attitude towards the adoption of a hypothetical subscription were assessed.

**Summary of Findings**

Factor analysis confirmed the two-facet structure of secure consumer attachment, consisting of embrace of vulnerability and drive for closeness. Interestingly, the relationship between secure
personal attachment and secure consumer attachment only proved significant for the first facet, embrace of vulnerability. Likewise, subsequent paths from secure consumer attachment to loyalty only proved significant for the first facet, again leaving out the second facet drive for closeness. The reason might be that this second facet describes consumers’ desire to form close relationships, which might be less important in online retail. In contrast, embrace of vulnerability describes the mere willingness to trust or depend on a retailer, which might be more appropriate in online shopping. The influence of loyalty on attitude proved to be significant, fostering the idea of loyalty as an antecedent of SOS adoption. Our results further confirm the influence of utilitarian as well as hedonic motivations on SOS. Overall, we show that secure personal attachment, via the more relation-specific consumer attachment, affects loyalty to an online retailer, which—to a certain extent—influences attitude towards the adoption of a subscription service from this retailer.

**Key Contributions**

Our research adds to marketing literature by applying attachment theory to the investigation of consumer relationships in the form of retail subscriptions. Although extant literature on subscription services covers certain aspects of adoption, this is, to the best of our knowledge, the first attempt to explain adoption from an attachment theory perspective. Thereby, our research addresses inconsistencies within attachment literature, e.g., to what extent global attachment predicts relation-specific attachment, by examining the personal, or global, secure attachment as well as the more relation-specific secure attachment towards an online retailer. Moreover, we show that the attitude towards adopting an online retail subscription is further dependent on consumers’ utilitarian as well as hedonic motivations. This research is especially valuable for online retailers offering subscriptions—and those who are planning to. In light of our
findings, we recommend managers to identify securely personal attached consumer segments, as they are prone to form social bonds. These consumers might score high on the embrace of vulnerability facet of secure consumer attachment and thus do not fear putting trust in online retailers. Notably, members of this segment are likely to develop loyalty. In turn, loyal consumers are more prone to adopt such subscription offers.

References are available upon request.
THE IMPACT OF GUARDIANSHIP POLICIES ON FRONTLINE EMPLOYEES

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Keywords: Deviant behavior, frontline employees, shoplifting, policy fairness

Description: Four experiments investigate the mechanisms and outcomes of expecting retail frontline employees to act as guardians against consumers’ deviant behaviors.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Consumers are not always honest, nor do they always follow the rules. Recently, major cities and retailers have noticed alarming spikes in crime as “packs of shoplifters regularly make off with hundreds of dollars-worth in merchandise” (Wallace 2021). While most extant research related to shoplifting seems to consider societal, social justice and/or criminal/law enforcement impact(s), little work considers the viewpoint of the retailing industry, and specifically of the front-line employees (FLEs). Some limited early efforts sought to quantify the impact of shoplifting from the perspective of retailers (French, Crask & Mader 1984) and even explored managerial perspectives (Budden, Yeargain & Miller, Jr. 1991) related to the challenges created. However, more recent work has (at best) focused on employee training/prevention (Potdar, Guthrie, Gnoth & Garry 2018), ethnic stereotyping (Sparkman & Eidelman; 2016) and individual shoplifter prevention (Korgaonkar, Gironda, Petrescu, Krishen & Mangelburg 2019).

Concurrent with the noted increase in shoplifting, there has also been a clear shift in responsibility wherein the burden of customer policing has fallen on the shoulders of FLEs. However, as retailers communicate expectations and adopt formal policies outlining the roles and responsibilities of FLEs to act as guardians, these firms do so without much insight or guidance from academia. Consequently, our research is among the first to explore how guardianship policies are perceived by FLEs. In addition to providing insight into how deviant behavior policies might be perceived by FLEs, we also explore tactics retailers can employ to help manage these perceptions. Due to budgetary constraints or other sources of influence, retailers might be forced to enact policies expanding FLEs’ roles to include a guardianship capacity. We identify that simply offering a pay increase may not be enough to regain equity for
FLEs who are now expected to confront potential shoplifters. Indeed, exploratory qualitative work suggests that FLEs now regularly confront feelings of anger, frustration, and helplessness in the face of shoplifting. We also explore expectations expressed in the store shoplifting policy itself, such as whether the policy vaguely suggests (Study 1), requires (Studies 2 through 4), permits (Studies 2, and 3) or prohibits guardianship (Study 4). Results are shared and contributions discussed.

Method and Data

Four experiments were designed to test our predictions. Study 1 examines the effect of adding expectations of guardianship behaviors to FLE duties. This study employed a 2-cell (guardianship policy: absent, present) between-subjects design with 209 undergraduate students completing (M_age = 26; 54% Female). Study 2 evaluates whether the behavioral expectations communicated by the policy and whether pay increases can improve policy perceptions. Ninety participants were recruited from an online panel (M_age = 38; 46% Female) to complete Study 2, which employed a 2 (customer engagement: permitted, required) by 2 (pay increase: none, 10%) between-subjects design. Study 3 explores the role of empowerment in the formulation of fairness perceptions and considers the moderating role of social influences. A 2 (customer engagement: permitted, required) by 2 (customer relationship: weak, strong) between-subjects design was employed to one-hundred ninety-six participants recruited from an online panel (M_age = 38; 38% Female). Study 4 investigates how less empowering policies (e.g., prohibited vs. required) affect fairness and extends these effects to a more managerially-relevant outcome variable in turnover intentions. Further, Study 4 incorporates the moderating role of job-related anxiety. A 2-cell (customer engagement: required, prohibited) between-subjects design was
employed to two-hundred and five participants from an online panel (M_{age} = 37; 43\% Female). Additionally, this study expands the investigation to determine whether employees’ perceptions of fairness can ultimately lead to FLE’s increased turnover intentions.

**Summary of Findings**

Study 1 reveals that the presence of the expanded role of FLEs compared with the control condition leads to significantly greater levels of anger (M_{control} = 2.48, SD = 1.59; M_{guardian} = 3.73, SD = 1.70; t = 6.33, p < .01), and reduces perceptions of fairness (M_{control} = 5.26, SD = 1.31; M_{guardian} = 3.99, SD = 1.59; t = 6.33, p < .01). Study 2 reveals that, when FLEs are permitted (but not required) to confront shoplifters a pay increase leads to greater perceptions of fairness (M_{pay increase} = 5.58, SD = 1.06; M_{no pay increase} = 4.43, SD = 1.72; F(1,86) = 7.29, p < .01. However, when FLEs are required to confront shoplifters, a pay increase does not improve fairness perceptions (M = 4.74_{no pay increase}, SD = 1.62; M = 4.45_{pay increase}, SD = 1.55; p = .54). Study 3 reveals an indirect effect of Engagement (permitted vs. required) → Empowerment → Anger → Fairness, where requiring confrontation reduces empowerment, increases anger, resulting in less favorable fairness perceptions. This effect is significant for those individuals in the presence of strong customer relationships but not for those individuals in the presence of weak customer relationships. The results of Study 4 reveal an indirect effect of Engagement (prohibited vs. required) → Fairness → Turnover Intentions where requiring confrontation is perceived as less fair, resulting in increased turnover intentions. This effect is significant for those individuals higher in job-related anxiety but not for those with lower job-related anxiety.
Key Contributions

Study 1 results reveal a detrimental effect of guardianship policies. Study 2 finds that pay increases and perceived organizational support are important factors for managers to consider in setting their guardianship policies, as it can affect perceptions of policy fairness. Specifically, a pay increase appears to only lead to more favorable fairness perception when confrontation is permitted (but not required). Results from study 3 suggest that FLE empowerment is an important factor for managers to consider in setting their guardianship policies, as it can affect perceptions of policy fairness. This effect is most pronounced when FLEs are expected to confront shoplifters in the presence of customers with whom FLEs possess strong social ties. Study 4 reveals that FLEs who are anxious about the thought of confronting shoplifters are likely to perceive guardianship policies requiring intervention as less fair than policies prohibiting intervention. The perceptions of policy fairness ultimately lead to an increase in FLE turnover intentions.

References are available upon request.
THE IMPACT OF VALUE CONGRUENCE AND SOCIAL INTERACTION BETWEEN FOUNDER AND BACKERS ON INTENTION TO INVEST

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Keywords: Crowdfunding; Value congruence; Social interaction; Perceived distance; Perceived credibility.

Description: This study investigated how the value congruence and social interaction between crowdfunding founders and backers can influence perceived psychological distance, backers’ perceived credibility, and intention to invest.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Crowdfunding is a new venture for small businesses or entrepreneurs who want to be financed through support from the public with a hope to make their creative ideas come true. Crowdfunding platforms may function like a marketplace where new products or activity ideas are revealed. However, financing through the crowdfunding method might also suffer from
obstacles due to the limitations of the platform, information asymmetry, and other risk concerns related to product quality or performance. The presentation of the project ideas on the crowdfunding platform is crucial to its success. Therefore, what determines a crowdfunding project's perceived credibility is essential to a crowdfunding project's success and hence is the main theme of this study.

This study investigated the relationship between founders and backers, relying on construal level theory and source credibility theory as the primary theoretical foundation. Specifically, this study aimed to examine whether the value congruence and social interaction between founders and backers could impact perceived psychological distance in determining the backers' perceived credibility and intention to invest.

**Method and Data**

A pretest was conducted to validate the two scenarios to be used in studies 1 and 2.

Study 1 and 2 were experiments with a 2 [value congruence: high vs. close] x 2 [social interaction: high vs. low] between-subject and full-factorial design. The purpose of study 1 was to evaluate the impact of value congruence and social interaction on the perceived distance, perceived credibility, and intention to invest. The purpose of study 2 was to conform to study 1’s results. Both studies used the same hypothetical project about a multifunctional bag made from animal leather. Study 2 used the real value of the respondents. The sample is 139 for study 1 and 144 for study 2, collected from Amazon MTurk.

**Summary of Findings**

Studies 1 and 2 showed consistent results that both value congruence and social interaction positively affect perceived distance. Higher value congruence and social interaction will result in
shorter perceived distance. Besides, perceived distance positively and significantly affects perceived credibility. The closer the perceived distance, the more people will perceive the project as credible. The findings highlighted the critical mediating role of perceived credibility towards the relationship between perceived psychological distance and intention to invest.

**Key Contributions**

First, this study contributes to crowdfunding research on how to induce perceived credibility from their backers. Value congruence and social interaction are two main factors that positively influence perceived psychological distance so that perceived credibility is enhanced and intention to invest is increased.

Second, this study is among the first to adopt construal level theory to the crowdfunding context in measuring backers’ perceived distance. The use of construal level theory in crowdfunding research is scarce. This research could be a meaningful effort offering academic insights regarding the effect of construal level on backers’ intention to invest in crowdfunding projects.

Third, the analysis results confirmed the roles of value congruence and social interaction with their positive effects on perceived distance, perceived credibility, and backers’ intention to invest and provide useful information to potential founders to boost the success rate of their crowdfunding projects. This study suggests founders to find suitable ways to enhance potential investors’ perceived value congruence to attract their attention. According to the findings, high interactivity could positively influence the perception of potential backers. Checking and updating comment sections to get more reviews can make backers feel closer to the project and the funder. The closer the backers feel, the higher chance it is to get more funding supports.

This study was supported by the first author’s funding from the Ministry of Science and Technology in Taiwan (MOST-106-2410-H-006 -015 -MY2)
References are available on request.
THE ROLE OF ANTHROPOMORPHISM IN CUSTOMER-ROBOT INTERACTION

*Rae Yule Kim, Montclair State University*

**Keywords:** Human-robot interaction (HRI), anthropomorphism, design thinking, consumer robotics, service robots, cognition, robot design, humanoid

**Description:** This paper discusses a research gap in customer-robot interaction and potential moderating factors for future studies to explore.

**EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

**Research Question**

Robots are on the way to being more pervasive in everyday life. Robotics design has received increasing attention recently; however, the findings are often contradictory, suggesting that customer responses to robots are complex and the comprehensive framework for consumer-robot interaction is yet to be discovered. Robotics design by nature is usually based on the function of the robot. Robotics research predominantly focuses on the software aspects in human-robot interaction. The previous findings from marketing research on product anthropomorphism add some meaningful insights into how the external design of robots can play a significant role to improve human-robot interaction too. This article discusses the role of marketing research in providing user-centric solutions for robotics design; and how anthropomorphism research can be extended to make novel contributions for design thinking for consumer robotics.
Summary of Finding

The anthropomorphic design of robotics can improve user perception, resilience, and motivation to initiate social interactions with robots. On the contrary, consumers might experience an increased level of stress and show uncanny valley reactions due to robot anthropomorphism. It is of critical importance for future research to further explore how the design aspect of robots influences the user experiences, particularly by filling the research gap, where specific design characteristics in the anthropomorphism of robots can largely shift the user experiences in HRI. We identify facial schema and emotional expressions of robots as potential moderating factors for the effect of robotics anthropomorphism on consumer-robot interaction. Future research is encouraged to explore the phenomenon by expanding the depth of the anthropomorphism variables: facial schema and emotional expressions to improve specificity in research and gain insights about factors that improve or deteriorate consumer experiences in interaction with humanoids. In this article, we have identified facial schema and emotional expression as potential moderating factors and discussed how these certain factors might influence customer responses in aspects of satisfaction versus the uncanny valley.

Key Contributions

The emergence of 4.0 and 5.0 enabling network technologies is creating multifaceted sociotechnical challenges that have significant impacts on human well-being. The effect of robotics design on HRI has received increasing attention recently; however, the findings are often contradictory, suggesting that customer responses to robots are complex and the framework for consumer-robot interaction is yet to be discovered. This article provides a comprehensive review
of previous literature and identified some design aspects of robots to influence customers’ interaction with robots.

*References are available upon request.*
THE ROLE OF TIME IN CUSTOMER REACTIONS FOR SCARCITY APPEALS

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Keywords: Scarcity appeal, temporal distance, hotel evaluation, purchase intention

Description: This study aims to expand our understandings of how to use a scarcity appeal as an advertising tool for building a consumer’s positive attitude toward a hotel and purchase intention.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

This research examined the joint effects of two levels of scarcity appeals (low vs. high), and the time, such that how much time is remaining from the travel date (short vs. long) on attitude toward hotel and purchase intention. Specifically, it investigates whether a scarcity appeal directly influences the increase of purchase intention or indirectly influences the increase of purchase intention when a positive attitude toward a hotel is built through a scarcity appeal. Besides, the role of temporal distance, namely time...
remaining from the travel date, is explored how it moderates the relationships of scarcity, attitude toward a hotel, purchase intention.

**Method and Data**

This research utilized a Scarcity appeal (low vs. high) x Time remained from the travel date (a week: close from the travel date vs. three months: far from the travel date) between-subjects design. Undergraduate students at a Korean university participated in the experiment in return for extra credit in a course. We designed a questionnaire of an experiment in which a scenario and an advertisement for a hotel were presented to the participants. To test the hypotheses of the research model that includes the moderated mediation, the PROCESS macro Model 8 (Hayes, 2017) was examined by using the bootstrapping approach.

**Summary of Findings**

The results showed that when the time remaining from the travel date is long, a low level of scarcity appeal leads to higher hotel evaluation and purchase intention than a high level of scarcity. Whereas, when the time remaining from the travel date is short, a high level of scarcity appeal leads to higher hotel evaluation. The moderated mediation analysis showed that the indirect effect of scarcity appeal on purchase intention via hotel evaluation was only significant when the temporal distance is short (vs. long).

**Statement of Key Contributions**

The present research suggests a rationale for disparate advertising strategies of a scarcity appeal to successfully achieve a positive hotel evaluation and purchase
intention with considerations of the temporal distance. When the time remaining from
the travel date is close, a firm’s marketer needs to consider utilizing a high level of
scarcity appeal advertisement to achieve a positive hotel evaluation, in turn, purchase
intention. When the time remaining from the travel date is far, a firm’s marketer should
use a low scarcity appeal to increase a consumer’s hotel evaluation and purchase
intention.
UNDERSTANDING ANTECEDENTS OF ONLINE RECOMMENDATION AGENT USE
– A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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Keywords: Online Recommendation Agents, Agent Adoption, Agent Usage

Description: The conceptual framework presented in this research can help marketers and practitioners identifies various antecedents to using online recommendation agents by consumers.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

As the popularity of e-Commerce businesses grow all over the world, Online Recommendation Agents (ORAs) are also gaining popularity as they help businesses to understand their customers better and increase their satisfaction by offering them desired and personalized products or services. Although scholars have identified several factors that effect the use of these agents, a review of the extant literature reveals absence of a comprehensive research that can help marketers to understand various factors that encourage customers to use such agents. This research aims at fulfilling this gap by answering the research question – what are the various antecedents of ORA usage by customers?

Summary of Findings
The framework posits that the use of ORAs will depend on five main categories of factors – (1) user (or customer) related characteristics such as trust and attitude towards ORAs, (2) task related characteristics such as perceived risk and time pressure, (3) product (or service) related characteristics such as type of product and personalization, (4) ORA related characteristics such as perceived ease of use and usefulness, and (4) User-ORA intersection related characteristics such as perceived decision process and outcome similarity.

**Key Contributions**

Although scholars have identified several factors that affect the use of online recommendation agents (ORAs), a review of the extant literature reveals absence of a comprehensive research that can help marketers to understand various factors that encourage customers to use such agents. This research contributes to the literature by developing a conceptual framework which identifies various antecedents to using ORAs and classify them across logical categories. ORAs are known to benefit e-Commerce businesses by facilitating product customizations through identifying browsing patterns and understanding customer needs, reduction in costs of collecting customers’ preference information, thus increasing their overall revenues. The framework would help e-Commerce businesses to design and develop better ORAs or improve existing ones by providing more understanding on the different factors and circumstances that affect willingness to use these agents by customers.

References are available upon request.
USING CUSTOMER EDUCATION TO BOOST POSITIVE WORD OF MOUTH

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Keywords: Customer education, word-of-mouth, customer expertise, knowledge sharing

Description: This paper investigates how educating customers regarding a product shapes their social interactions with each other—word-of-mouth, along with the underlying mechanism and boundary conditions of such an effect.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Customers need to have the necessary knowledge and skills to obtain the most value of a product. Systematically providing customers with product-related knowledge, skills, and abilities by customer education programs can help them fully utilize a product offering. The extant body of literature shows that customer education can shape customer-company relationships while ignoring that customer education also has the potential to shape the interactions among customers themselves by enabling them with product-related knowledge. Thus, to fill this gap in the existing literature, this paper aims to answer: 1) Does customer education enhance customers’ positive word-of-mouth (WOM) for a brand? 2) What are the process mechanism and key boundary conditions of the WOM effect?

Method and Data

We tested our hypotheses in two lab experiments, one with a financial services context and the other with a consumer goods context. Specifically, Study 1 employed a 2 (customer education vs. control) × 1 between-subjects experimental design. The final sample included 595 adults (295 in the customer-education condition and 300 in the control condition; 49.1% female; $M_{age} = 32.25$; $SD = 11.83$). The sample was collected via several channels and platforms to reach different participants of diverse ages and occupations. Study 2 generalized the findings of Study 1 to a consumer goods context. We also tested the proposed mediation effects and moderation effects in this study. Study 2 applied a 3 (customer education with video, customer education with text, control) × 1 between-subjects experimental design and used a student sample. The final sample included 390 participants (118 in the video education condition, 112 in the text education condition, and 160 in the control condition; 73.3% female; $M_{age} = 24.71$; $SD = 5.97$). Study 2 also filtered the possible effect caused by different educational formats.
Summary of Findings

This paper demonstrates that customer education helps generate customers’ favorable word-of-mouth for a brand. We also show that this effect exists because customer education makes customers more satisfied with a brand while increasing their perceived expertise for a product, which in turn enhances their positive WOM intention for the brand. Furthermore, we present two boundary conditions for the main effects. We find that this WOM effect is stronger for customers with less prior knowledge regarding the educational topic, and customers who are more socially active and/or have a high level of enjoyment when sharing knowledge with others. In addition, we found no differences in effects on WOM between text education and video education when the same knowledge is shared with customers.

Key Contributions

Theoretically, this paper first extends research on customer education by documenting that brands’ educational efforts shape not only how customers interact with brands but also with each other. Second, prior research has proposed a limited number of strategies to influence customer word-of-mouth, whereas we introduced educating customers as a novel strategy to generate positive brand word-of-mouth. Furthermore, we investigated the mechanism and boundary conditions of such WOM effects, delivering a more nuanced understanding of ways for companies to gain favorable WOM efficiently.

Managerially, we provide insights into how brands can design effective word-of-mouth campaigns. First, we encourage brands to invest in educating their customers and be more open to sharing product-related knowledge. Second, brands should become more customer-centric by actively recognizing and understanding real problems that customers encounter in their purchasing and consumption. Third, brands should target the right customer groups to make the best use of their limited educational resources. Specifically, educating novice
customers who have relatively less product knowledge and customers who are more socially active is more effective for brands to reap enhanced word-of-mouth.
‘DID I MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE?’ SUGGESTIONS FOR REDUCING COGNITIVE DISSONANCE IN A HIGH-CREDENCE SERVICE: THE CASE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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Keywords: Cognitive Dissonance, Higher Education Marketing, High-credence Services, Service Marketing, Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction.

Based on cognitive dissonance theory (CD), the purpose of this work was to empirically investigate the sources and consequences of CD among new customers of a high-credence service (higher education), as well as to propose remedies to reduce it and explore the role of the service provider in managing cognitive dissonance.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

This paper addresses the application of cognitive dissonance (CD) theory to a high-credence service, namely higher education. The higher education sector is characterized by high risk in terms of college choice (Angulo-Ruiz et al. 2016). Purchase and consumption overlap and CD can occur immediately after purchase but also during...
consumption (O'Neill and Palmer 2004). Contemporary higher education has grown in importance, influence, and complexity over the past decade (Knight 2008). It is characterized by a large number of new opportunities and constant change over time (Roese and Summerville 2005). The purpose of this study is to understand students' worldviews in the context of modern higher education. Three research questions are addressed: What are sources and consequences of CD in high-credence services, namely higher education? Which suggestions exist to reduce CD in high-credence services? What constitutes the role of the service provider in high-credence services to reduce CD?

**Method and Data**

Interpretivism (Rea and Parker 2014) was chosen as the overarching research philosophy for this work. Twenty-nine graduate business students who had attended a seminar on value-based marketing were introduced to the basics of CD and asked to apply this concept to their first college experience and related causes of CD in an essay. The students also suggested ideas on how they would feel better and how their dissonance could be leveraged. Third, they discussed the role of their instructors and the program director in terms of how they could help reduce CD. The students' elaborations were anonymized and processed using a 6-step thematic content analysis (Mayring 2015; Schreier 2012). First, the author familiarized himself with the data by reading the transcripts. Initial coding resulted in the generation of 350 codes from the data set. Subsequently, the codes were sorted into potential themes. The coded data were classified and overarching themes were formed. Next, the themes were refined and further divided into subthemes. The themes were given meaningful names and the report was generated. MAXQDA (2020) was used for data analysis.
Summary of Findings

The mismatch between promise and performance is a key driver of CD in a high-credence service. Exaggerated expectations and inadequate performance lead to dissatisfaction and CD. Realistic presentation of benefits and customer involvement are important to reduce CD.

Positive reinforcement of the decision made helps reduce CD in credence services. This can be achieved through vivid representations of tangible goods or by rewarding customers for their past engagement and performance.

Involving high-credence service customers in intra-group communication and encouraging feedback will psychologically increase the attractiveness of the chosen alternative and/or decrease the attractiveness of the rejected alternative. Feedback sessions with groups or individuals help identify and manage inconsistent statements within the group.

To reduce CD, individuals seek confirmatory information about their choice after purchase. Reinforcing service customers’ decision with confirming materials helps to reduce regret, justifies the decision, and helps abandon potential alternatives.

Inseparability, a main issue in service marketing, is important in relation to CD. A service provider’s qualities of listening and motivating are more important than administrating and controlling service consumption. Well instructed and trained, service providers can reduce the psychological discomfort of their clients - as role models, discussants, or simply ‘godparents’.

Key Contributions

The aim of this study was to provide an update of cognitive dissonance theory in a high-credence service, higher education. While some findings are consistent with conceptual or empirical findings from other fields, such as consumer goods and services, there are specific
discoveries that can be attributed to the context of high-credence services. For the scientific community, this study provides updated insights into CD in a rapidly changing high-credence service environment, higher education. The relationship of satisfaction/dissatisfaction, CD, regret, and the service encounter was discussed and underscored by the results. The role of honest and realistic marketing and advertising in creating and/or reducing CD was also highlighted. Managing inseparability was confirmed in its importance for CD reduction.

For higher education marketers, the findings suggest addressing the “overpromise/underdelivery” trap to which there is always some temptation in an increasingly competitive environment. The important role of service providers (faculty, programme directors) was also addressed, noting that the motivation, engagement, and training of these staff plays a critical role in reducing CD among service customers.

References are available upon request.
Marketing Strategy
A NARCISSISTIC CEO IN TIMES OF TURBULENCE - IS IT DESIRABLE FOR A FIRM'S REPUTATION?

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Keywords: CEO Narcissism, Personality Psychology, Firm Reputation, Non-market Strategy,
          Computer-Aided Text Analysis

Description: In this study, we investigate the impact of CEO narcissism on a firm’s immaterial strategic asset of reputation by analyzing a CEO and lobbying data sample of companies listed in the S&P 500 index between 2005 and 2017.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Companies actively safeguard their reputation, as it allows them to charge higher prices (Kihistrom and Riordan 1984), differentiates them (Turban and Cable 2003), and improves organizational outcomes (Roberts and Dowling 2002). Love, Lim, and Bednar (2017) showed that besides other organizational factors, CEOs influence how firms are perceived.

A CEO’s decisions and behaviors are strongly influenced by personality. One trait which has especially intrigued researchers is narcissism (e.g., Chatterjee and Hambrick 2007, 2011). Narcissism is a complex personality trait, associated with a fragile yet exaggerated self-image, a lack of empathy and high levels of hostility when challenged (Rosenthal and Pittinsky 2006), and
charismatic and bold behaviors (Grijalva et al. 2015). While narcissistic CEOs desire public acclaim (Kernis 2005) and can be charismatic (Galvin, Waldman, and Balthazard 2010), their actions are often socially insensitive (Back et al. 2013). Due to this, we do not know for certain whether narcissistic CEOs as “faces of the firm” (Love, Lim, and Bednar 2017), positively or negatively impact reputation.

Drawing from signaling theory, corporate reputation, and CEO narcissism research, we aim to answer the following research questions: (1) “How do narcissistic CEOs influence company reputation?” (2) “How does this relationship change in turbulent market environments?”

**Method and Data**

We compiled a sample of 592 firm-year observations for 147 CEOs from 94 firms listed on the S&P 500 index between 2007-2017.

**Dependent variable:** Firm reputation was obtained from the reputation score published in the Fortune “Most Admired Companies” survey in a given year. This rating is obtained by Fortune Magazine through surveys of executives and directors.

**Independent variable:** We use narcissistic speech and rhetoric (Boyd and Pennebaker 2017; Hirsh and Peterson 2009) as a proxy for CEO narcissism. We gathered unscripted earnings call speech samples for 147 CEOs of 94 firms. Based on these, we conducted a CATA analysis to identify narcissistic speech, using the CAT Scanner software (McKenny, Short, and Newman 2012) and the narcissistic rhetoric dictionary developed by Anglin et al. (2018).

**Moderating variable:** Market turbulence was calculated as the ratio of sales and general administrative expenses to sales of all firms within the same industry (Saboo, Chakravarty, and Grewal 2016).
Control variables: To control for potential effects on our dependent variable, we included CEO- and firm-specific controls.

Model: We used a generalized estimating equations model in Stata 16.0 (Liang and Zeger 1986) for which we defined a Gaussian distribution with an identity link function (Ballinger 2004).

Summary of Findings

In our analysis, we followed Cohen and Cohen (2003) and used standardized values for all variables. We controlled for multicollinearity by ensuring that coefficients between covariates were below .3 (Cohen et al. 2003). CEO role tenure and CEO age \( r = .43 \), as well as CEO duality and CEO age \( r = .32 \), were above the threshold. These variables are important controls for the potential impact of CEO narcissism on corporate reputation and positive correlations between these variables were to be expected. Also, market turbulence and the high-tech industry dummy variable were positively correlated \( r = .57 \). The variance inflation factors for all covariates were below 2 with a mean VIF of 1.2. The overall condition number between variables was 3.15. In sum, we did not observe any indicators for multicollinearity in our analysis.

Our results provide considerable support for our hypotheses. H1 predicted that CEO narcissism negatively affects corporate reputation \( \beta = -.184, p = .006 \). In H2, we theorized that market turbulence positively moderates the relationship between CEO narcissism and corporate reputation. Our study confirms this and shows that market turbulence increases the negative effect of CEO narcissism on corporate reputation \( \beta = .198, p < .005 \).

Statement of Key Contributions

How firms are perceived is impacted by different factors including the CEO (Love, Lim, and Bednar 2017). Since CEO behavior is strongly influenced by personality, we focus on the impactful personality trait of narcissism. Anchored in corporate reputation literature, narcissism
research, and signaling theory, we ask how CEO narcissism influences reputation, and how this relationship is shaped in turbulent markets.

First, we advance reputation research by emphasizing the importance of CEOs as reputation ambassadors and showing that CEO narcissism as a personality trait negatively impacts the way a firm is perceived by the public. To our knowledge, this study is among the first to consider CEO narcissism as an antecedent of corporate reputation.

Second, we contribute to CEO narcissism research by further exploring its non-performance consequences. So far, CEO narcissism has been associated with positive and negative consequences (e.g., Ham et al., 2018; Olsen et al., 2013). By investigating its impact on corporate reputation, we provide further evidence of the potentially devastating effects of CEO narcissism.

From a practical perspective, this work provides insights for marketers and public relations executives. The awareness about CEO narcissism enables firms to be prepared and to proactively manage its effects on firm reputation.

References are available upon request
THE EFFECT OF PRODUCT RECALL BY COMPETITORS ON INNOVATION

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Keywords: Product recall, competitor orientation, competitive response, organizational learning, new product introduction, innovation.

Description: This study examines competition and learning effects as moderators of the relationship between product recalls by competitors and a firm’s new product introductions in the context of consumer packaged goods.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

This study examines factors that influence how firms adjust their new product introductions following a product recall by a competitor. When a firm observes a product recall by a competitor, one option would be to compete more aggressively since the wounded competitor may be less able to respond to a competitive action (we call this the competition effect). Alternatively, a firm could focus more on learning from the competitor’s failure because the failure may provide an important opportunity to improve the firm’s own product safety (we call this the learning effect). Since firm resources and managerial attention are necessarily limited,
there is a tradeoff between competition and learning effects. We hypothesize that heterogeneity of the recalling firm will weaken the learning effect because greater heterogeneity will make it more difficult to correctly identify the causes of the competitor’s failure. We also hypothesize that competitor orientation will reduce the learning effect because competitor-oriented firms will be more motivated to take advantage of competitive opportunities when the reputation of the competitor has been damaged by a product recall. Finally, we hypothesize that competitor orientation will attenuate the moderating effect of heterogeneity because competitor-oriented firms can use their competitor knowledge to overcome the difficulty of learning from heterogenous competitors’ product recalls.

Method and Data

The empirical context of this study is the U.S. consumer packaged goods industry, specifically food, beverage, and personal care products. We used GlobalData’s Product Launch Analytics to identify 84 public firms and their competitors based on product categories, and we counted these firms’ new product introductions from 2014-2019. We then used OpenFDA to measure the frequency of product recalls by the sample firms and their competitors. To measure recalling firm heterogeneity, we calculated a Blau Index using the ratio of each competitor’s product recall frequency to all competitors’ recall frequencies. Higher heterogeneity means that the competitors’ product recalls are dispersed over a larger number of recalling firms. To measure competitor orientation, we conducted a text analysis of each firm’s annual reports. Finally, we collected firm-level control variables from the Compustat and D&B Hoovers databases. In total, we obtained 385 firm-year observations. We then tested the proposed model by estimating a series of fixed effects negative binomial models.
Summary of Findings

The direct impact of competitors’ product recalls on the focal firm’s new product introduction frequency was insignificant, but became negative and significant when moderators were added to the model, indicating a partial learning effect. The interaction between heterogeneity and competitors’ recall frequency was positive and significant, showing that heterogeneity attenuates the learning effect. In addition, the interaction between competitor orientation and competitors’ recall frequency was positive and significant, showing that competitor orientation also attenuates the learning effect. Finally, the three-way interaction between heterogeneity, competitor orientation, and competitors’ recall frequency was negative and significant, showing that competitor orientation reduces the learning-inhibiting moderation effect of heterogeneity.

Key Contributions

The contribution of this study to the marketing literature is five-fold. First, this study contributes to the literature on product recall by addressing the understudied area of how firms adjust their innovation following product recalls by competitors. Second, this study contributes to competitor orientation by showing its complex influence on learning. Specifically, competitor orientation can lead firms to dismiss learning opportunities that would help firms improve safety, but it may also help firms overcome the difficulty of learning from heterogeneous competitors’ failures. Third, this study contributes to the understanding of vicarious learning by adding new evidence that heterogeneity inhibits vicarious learning from competitors. Fourth, this study highlights the link between product recalls by competitors and a firm’s innovation by showing that managers face a tradeoff between improving existing product safety and introducing new product since firm resources and managerial attention are limited. Finally, this study contributes to the
literature on learning from failure by revealing the complexity of learning from competitors’ failures in the context of product recalls.
USING COMPUTER-AIDED TEXT ANALYSIS TO INVESTIGATE
CONTINGENCIES OF MARKET ORIENTATION AND
ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION EFFECTS ON FIRM FINANCIAL
PERFORMANCE

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Keywords: Marketing Strategies, Contingency Effects, Computer-Aided Text Analysis, Risk, Optimism

Description: This study uses computer-aided text analysis (CATA) examine contingency effects of market orientation and entrepreneurial orientation effects on firm performance at the individual firm level.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Market orientation (MO) and entrepreneurial orientation (EO) are among the most prominent strategic orientations investigated in marketing research. While MO relates to the level of which a company dedicates itself to meeting customer needs and outperforming the competition along the way (Narver & Slater, 1990), EO focuses on the decision-making styles, processes, and methods that drive entrepreneurial actions (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Their effectiveness however depends on the context a company uses them (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993). Comparable studies merely focus on turbulence as some form of variance in the market/technologies. We want to obtain a more detailed assessment of the situation, since we assume that the environmental effects are different for each company individually.

To conceptualize the situation, we use the risk-optimism framework of Pröllochs and Feuerriegel (2020). In that context optimism refers to the degree of how companies evaluate their internal capabilities being able to sufficiently manage the outcome of an unscheduled material event on their business (Pröllochs & Feuerriegel, 2020). Risk on the other side refers to a company's uncertainty regarding the probability and magnitude of the financial impact caused by an unscheduled material event (Bauer, 1967).

Method And Data

To answer the hypotheses, we gathered annual reports (Form 10-K) from the S&P500 companies since they provide insights in management perceptions and business strategies (Zachary et al., 2011). In addition we collected all available ad-hoc announcements (Form 8-K) to measure situational effects of unforeseen events. In the period from 2009 to 2019, a total of 76,096 8-K reports and 5,121 10-K reports were collected from the SEC database.
We measured the extent of the respective marketing strategy and the assessment of the market situation using one consistent computer-aided text analysis (CATA) approach with established dictionaries. For each document we calculated four scores and averaged them according to the fiscal years. Each score consists of the sum of the words indicating the individual dimensions of the corresponding construct relative to the total amount of words within the document.

We used a fixed-effects panel regression with mean-centered variables and estimate the following hierarchical model to test the hypotheses:

\[
\text{Abnormal Return}_{i,t+1} = \beta_1 MO_{i,t} + \beta_2 EO_{i,t} + \beta_3 Optimism_{i,t} + \beta_4 Risk_{i,t} + \beta_5 MO \times Optimism_{i,t} + \beta_6 EO \times Optimism_{i,t} + \beta_7 MO \times Risk_{i,t} + \beta_8 EO \times Risk_{i,t} + \beta_9 Controls + \eta_i + \varepsilon_{i,t}
\] (1)

where \(i\) stands for a company and \(t\) for the fiscal year.

**Summary of Findings**

Based on the regression outcomes, we found a positive effect of MO on abnormal returns \((p < .001\) for all models). Surprisingly, for EO the performance effect is negative \((p < .05\) for all models). All hierarchical regression models are significant \((p < .001)\). Adding the situational effects further increases the explanatory power of the model from 12.7% to 12.9%.

As expected optimism shows a significant increase in financial performance, while risk reduces financial performance significantly \((p < .001)\). Contrary to our hypotheses we observe a negative moderating effect of optimism on the effect of MO on financial performance. Furthermore, the effect of optimism on the relationship between EO and financial performance is against expectation. Despite the positive sign, the effect is not significant \((2.442, p > .1)\). In
line with our hypotheses, we found a negative moderating effect of risk on the performance impact of MO (-4.696, p < .05) and a positive moderating effect of risk on the performance effect of EO (5.944, p < .05).

**Statement of Key Contributions**

Overall, this research demonstrates that the successful use of marketing strategies hinges on the characteristics of the market situation. Specifically, we discover that the superior strategy changes in the context of risk. Environmental effects are therefore more complex than turbulences alone. As a result we observe that companies should adjust their strategy and focus on EO in the context of high risk. In the context of high optimism, companies high on MO should be careful to not let that lead to decrease in financial performance. However, in situations that are classified as neither risky nor optimistic, MO remains the recommended strategy. We still need further research due to the findings that high-optimism decreases the effectiveness of MO, which is contrary to our expectations. One possible explanation is, that companies give naive or biased assessments when classifying the situation as optimistic.

With our study, we provide evidence for the value of the use of CATA in marketing research. Without having to use surveys, which entails a dependency on low response rates, this approach gives insights into a company’s individual assessment of the situation and its characteristics.

References are available upon request
WHEN DO BUSINESS BUYERS OFFER SUPPLIERS A “SECOND CHANCE” AFTER BEING BETRAYED? THE MODERATING ROLE OF EMOTIONS OF BUSINESS BUYERS IN BETRAYAL INCIDENTS

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Keywords: perceived betrayal, emotion, anger, sadness, buyer-seller relationship

Description: This paper empirically examines when aggrieved business buyers offer a second change to offended suppliers after perceiving betrayals in the business relationships by focusing on two discrete emotions, anger (high-arousal) and sadness (low-arousal), grounded in emotion theory.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Questions

Managing trusted relationships is difficult because relationships involving trust are susceptible to the emergence of opportunism (Tajfel 2010; Williams 2007). Therefore, it is not surprising that many trusted business relationships suffer from the risk of betrayal (Kale and Singh 2009). Extant literature shows that betrayals shake the foundation of the relationship in business-to-customer contexts, resulting in terminating the relationship (e.g., Grégoire et al. 2009). However, the impact of betrayal on the relationship in a business-to-business context has received relatively little attention.

Moreover, despite the increasing awareness of the crucial role of emotions in understanding relationship dynamics (Harmeling et al. 2015), the role of business people’s emotions on important relationship outcomes or their strategic relationship management intentions has received insufficient attention (Andersen and Kumar 2006; Tähtinena and Blois 2011). Business relationships cannot prevent all of the events that may evoke strong negative emotions (Gould et al. 1999). Therefore, the neglect of the role of emotions in business relationships is problematic (Kumar et al. 2019).

Grounded in emotion theory, this paper investigates the moderating role of business people’s emotions – anger (high-arousal) and sadness (low-arousal) – to answer the question: when aggrieved buyers offer suppliers a “second chance” after perceiving a betrayal incident?

Method And Data

To test the main effect of perceived betrayal on relationship outcome and relationship dynamics and moderation effect of emotions, we recruited study participants who meet the following criteria: 1) whose job involves purchasing decision process for their company, 2) who have a certain degree of influence on purchasing decisions for their company, 3) who are full-time employees in the United States. At the beginning of the survey, participants were asked to recall a memorable problem in which they find their business partner (supplier) undeserving of their trust. Then, they were asked to report the problem in detail, including industry types, problem types, damage types, perception of betrayal, emotions experienced, and the time of the event. They also provided evaluations of the key constructs measured with existing multi-item scales adapted to the context of this study.

We specified a separate ordinary least squares regression model for each of the following dependent variables: satisfaction, trust, and intention to expand the relationship. To examine the moderating role of emotions, we included interaction terms of betrayal and emotions for each model. Control variables include firm- (firm size, industry types), relationship- (relationship age), individual-level (age, gender, work tenure, influence on purchase decision), and time covariates.
Summary of Findings

The business buyers’ perceived betrayal showed a significantly negative effect on their intention to expand the relationship with the supplier (H1: $\beta=-0.31$, $p<0.001$), thereby supporting H1. This relationship was magnified by their anger (H2c: $\beta=-0.15$, $p<0.01$) and mitigated by sadness (H3c: $\beta=0.11$, $p=0.067$). Therefore, H2c was supported but H3c was marginally supported.

When it comes to the negative relationship between the business buyers’ perceived betrayal and their satisfaction with the supplier (H2a: $\beta=-0.20$, $p<0.01$), their anger significantly magnified the main effect (H3a: $\beta=0.20$, $p<0.01$). Thus, both H2a and H3a were supported. The negative significant relationship between the business buyers’ perceived betrayal and their trust toward the supplier (H2b: $\beta=-0.32$, $p<0.01$) was significantly strengthened by their anger (H2b: $\beta=-0.17$, $p<0.01$) and significantly mitigated by their sadness (H3b: $\beta=0.15$, $p<0.05$), providing support for both H2b and H3b.

Statement of Key Contributions

This study empirically demonstrates that business people experience anger and sadness after perceiving a betrayal. More importantly, we show that the types of business people’s emotions are meaningful in predicting important relationship outcomes, such as satisfaction and trust, as well as, their intention to manage the relationship. Additionally, our findings of the differential effects of emotions on the relational and behavioral outcomes in the business relationship suggest practical implications. Business people can be attentive to their business partners’ emotional cues of anger and sadness and incorporate such information in managing problematic business relationships. By promoting new practices of improving emotional intelligence, business people can effectively maintain business relationships, thereby increasing customer retention, customer lifetime value, and revenue potential.

*References are available upon request*
SIG Programming
SPECIAL SESSION PROPOSAL: THE RESPONSE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS TO COVID-19

Special Session Proposed by Marketing for Higher Education SIG

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Keywords: Panel, COVID-19, Education, Marketing, Higher Education

Description: While the effects of COVID-19 and the health guidelines implemented to reduce the spread of disease have seriously disrupted higher education, the full magnitude of the changes and long-term consequences of the pandemic have yet to be fully realized. This special session aims to facilitate the important conversation of how higher education institutions have responded to COVID-19 and focuses on topics such as the impact of COVID-19 on enrollment, changes in class modality and use of technology, best practices in responding to pandemic-induced challenges, and long-term effects of such changes on higher education, in general, and marketing education, in specific.
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